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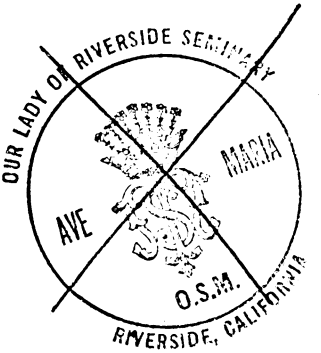

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SALVATION

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SALVATION

In the Light of Recent Pronouncements by the Holy See

BY

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INTRODUCTION

In his encyclical *Humani generis* Pope Pius XII referred to a statement by his great predecessor, Pope Pius IX, to the effect that the noblest function of sacred theology is that of showing how the doctrine defined by the Church is found in the sources of revelation—that is, in Sacred Scripture and in divine apostolic tradition—in the very sense in which the Church has proposed it. This book is the result of a laborious and humble effort to do this with reference to what the ecclesiastical teaching authority has taught and defined about the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation.

Few dogmas of the Catholic faith have been commented upon and interpreted in twentieth-century theological and religious literature as frequently and extensively as that which teaches us that there is no salvation outside the true Church of Jesus Christ. Hence any new book on this subject ought at least to try to offer some theological advantage on this subject not already available in currently accessible Catholic literature. The author of this present work sincerely believes that its publication is justified for these three reasons:

(1) This book quotes, and quotes at length, pertinent statements and definitions by the Holy See and by the Church's Oecumenical Councils on the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation. It analyzes these pronouncements and brings out explicitly the Catholic teachings referred to and implied in them. Then it examines the dogma, as it has been stated and explained by the Church's *magisterium*, in the light of what the sources of revelation have to say about the nature of the Church and about the processes of salvation and sanctification. Thus it is able to show that what the Church itself has always taught and defined on this subject is precisely what the divine message, contained in Scripture and tradition, has to say about salvation and about God's supernatural kingdom.

Any person who is at all familiar with what the great mass

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of religious and theological writings of our times have had to say about this dogma is quite well aware of the fact that, in an overwhelming majority of cases, these writings have been mainly, almost exclusively, concerned with proving and explaining how this dogma does not mean that only members of the Catholic Church can be saved. This, of course, is perfectly true. The ecclesiastical *magisterium*, in teaching and guarding this dogma, insists that there is no salvation outside of the Catholic Church and at the same time likewise insists that people who die without ever becoming members of the Catholic Church can obtain the Beatific Vision.

But if we, for all practical purposes, limit our explanation of the dogma to an assurance that it does not mean that every man who dies a non-member of the Catholic Church is not necessarily lost forever—as so many modern writings on this subject seem to do—we tend to lose sight of the central mysteries of God's merciful dispensation in the supernatural order. For, let us not forget it, the revealed truths about the necessity of the Catholic Church for the attainment of eternal salvation belong to the order of the great supernatural mysteries. They belong with God's revealed doctrine about grace, about the process of salvation, the work of the Redemption, and the Blessed Trinity. In showing how the teachings of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* are contained in the sources of revelation in the very sense in which they have been stated and defined by the Church itself, we can see this dogma of the Church precisely as the accurate and authoritative expression of a revealed mystery.

(2) During the pontificate of the present Holy Father three authoritative documents issued by the Holy See have instructed the members of the Church about the meaning of the dogma that there is no salvation outside of the Catholic Church. Two of these are encyclical letters, the *Mystici Corporis Christi*, issued June 29, 1943, and the *Humani generis*, dated August 12, 1950. The third is the Holy Office letter *Suprema haec sacra*, addressed by order of the Holy Father on August 8, 1949, to the Most Reverend Archbishop of Boston. The doc-

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trinal section of this last document is devoted exclusively to an explanation of this dogma. It is the most completely detailed statement of this teaching ever set forth in an authoritative document of the Church's *magisterium*.

There would obviously seem to be, not only room for, but an actual need of, a book that would present and analyze the teachings on this subject brought out in these three recent documents from the Holy See. And, in the lack of any other work in English devoted exclusively to the explanation of this portion of Catholic doctrine and written since the appearance of these three documents, the present book is humbly offered in the hope that it may satisfy that need.

(3) In the *Humani generis* the present Holy Father sternly rebuked some contemporary Catholic writers because, as he said, "they reduce to an empty formula the necessity of belonging to the true Church in order to attain to eternal salvation." Actually this particular part of Catholic doctrine is unique in that an inaccurate interpretation or presentation of it by a Catholic writer does actually constitute, in most cases, the reduction of this teaching to an empty formula.

Furthermore the vagaries of some writers, particularly in the field of popular religious literature, on the subject, are in some way explicable in terms of the peculiar history of the *tractatus de ecclesia* within the body of scholastic theology. A sketch of this history is available in the present volume, since I believe that the man who knows something about the basis of some of the more colorful misinterpretations of the dogma will be in a better position to appreciate and to defend the genuine teaching of the Church in this field.

This introduction would not be complete without an expression of sincere gratitude to the Very Reverend Dr. Francis J. Connell, C. SS. R., for these last fourteen years my brilliant and faithful associate in the work of *The American Ecclesiastical Review*. He has been kind enough to read and to correct the manuscript of this book with the same charitable care he has given to the reading and the correction of all I have written for publication since our association began.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SALVATION

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PART I

THE DOGMA OF SALVATION IN OFFICIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS OF THE CHURCH

There are several documents issued by the Church's supreme teaching authority which deal with the revealed doctrine that no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church. The latest editions of Denzinger's *Enchiridion symbolorum* carry upwards of twenty citations directly pertinent to this dogma, taken from different official documents issued by the Holy See and by Oecumenical Councils. If a man wants to learn exactly how the Catholic Church itself understands and teaches this revealed truth, he can best obtain this information by reading and studying these official and authoritative statements of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*.

Actually, however, it is not necessary to study every one of these statements individually. It so happens that there are eight of these official pronouncements which, taken together, bring out every aspect of Catholic teaching on this subject that the Church has included in its authoritative documents. Hence an examination of these eight statements will show us every aspect and facet of the Church's official and authoritative teaching about its own necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation.

The eight documents in which these pronouncements are contained are:

(1) A profession of the Catholic faith issued by the Fourth Lateran Council, the twelfth in the series of Oecumenical Councils, in 1215, during the pontificate of Pope Innocent III.

(2) The Bull *Unam sanctam*, published by Pope Boniface VIII, on November 18, 1302.

(3) The decree for the Jacobites, the Bull *Cantate Domino*, published by Pope Eugenius IV on February 4, 1442, and included in the *Acta* of the Council of Florence, the seventeenth among the Oecumenical Councils.

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(4) The allocution *Singulari quadam*, delivered on December 9, 1854, the day after the solemn definition of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, by Pope Pius IX, to the Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops gathered in Rome for that definition.

(5) The encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, addressed by Pope Pius IX to the Bishops of Italy on August 10, 1863.

(6) The encyclical letter *Mystici Corporis Christi*, published on June 29, 1943, by Pope Pius XII.

(7) The letter *Suprema haec sacra*, sent by the Holy Office, at the command of Pope Pius XII, to His Excellency the Most Reverend Archbishop of Boston, on August 8, 1949.

(8) The encyclical letter *Humani generis*, issued by Pope Pius XII on August 12, 1950.

Each of the eight chapters that go to make up the first part of this book will consider the teachings of one of these documents on the necessity of the Catholic Church for the attainment of eternal salvation. The documents will be studied in chronological order.

As authoritative statements of the teaching Church, all of these pronouncements of the Holy See and of Oecumenical Councils must be accepted with true internal consent by all Catholics. What they teach on the subject of this dogma is what all Catholics are bound in conscience to hold. It is definitely not enough for Catholics to receive these declarations with what has been called "respectful silence." It is not sufficient that they merely refrain from overt statements rejecting what has been taught in these authoritative documents of the *ecclesia docens*. Every Catholic is strictly bound in conscience to make what the Church has taught in this way his own view, his own conviction, on this subject. And, as a result, it is objectively wrong for any Catholic to hold an explanation of the Church's necessity for salvation which is in any way incompatible with what the Church has taught authoritatively about this dogma.

The first three of the eight documents studied in this book limit themselves, mainly, to the assertion as a dogma of the

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faith of the teaching that no man can be saved outside the Catholic Church. A dogma is a truth which the Church finds in Scripture or in divine apostolic tradition and which, either in solemn judgment or in its ordinary and universal teaching activity, it presents to its people as a doctrine revealed by God and as something which all are obligated to accept with the assent of divine and Catholic faith. Since the teaching that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church is a dogma, men are obligated in conscience to believe it as certainly true on the authority of God Himself, who has revealed it. Objectively the refusal to believe this teaching with an act of divine faith constitutes heresy. The public denial by a Catholic of this or any other dogma of the Church is something that carries with it a loss of membership in the true Church.

The first three of these pronouncements are contained in documents of the Church's solemn teaching activity. The other five belong to the ordinary *magisterium* of the Holy See. Four of these, the teachings contained in the allocution *Singulari quadam* and in the encyclical letters *Quanto conficiamur moerore, Mystici Corporis Christi,* and *Humani generis,* were issued by the Sovereign Pontiff himself. The other statement treated in this book, that of the Holy Office letter *Suprema haec sacra,* is an act of a Roman Congregation. Thus, according to the rule set forth in canon 7 of the *Codex iuris canonici,* it must likewise be considered and described as an act of the Holy See.

All of these statements of the Church's ordinary *magisterium* are authoritative. Pope Pius XII spoke of the Holy Father's own ordinary teaching power in the encyclical *Humani generis,* in a passage which has special reference to the teaching set forth in encyclical letters.

> Nor must one think that the truths proposed in encyclical letters do not demand assent by themselves (*assensum per se non postulare*), since in writing such letters the Popes do not exercise the supreme power of their teaching authority. For these matters are taught with the ordinary teaching authority, of which it is true to say: "He who heareth you, heareth me"; and generally what is expounded and inculcated in encyclical letters already appertains to

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Catholic doctrine for other reasons. But if the Supreme Pontiffs in their *Acta* take the trouble to issue a decision on a point hitherto controverted, it is obvious that this point, according to the mind and will of the same Pontiffs, can no longer be considered a question open to discussion among theologians.[1]

The following passage, taken from the letter *Tuas libenter,* written by Pope Pius IX on December 21, 1863, to the Archbishop of Munich, gives a clear view of the doctrinal authority of the Holy See's statements, including pronouncements issued by the Congregations of the Roman Curia.

Even in the matter of that subjection which must be given in the act of divine faith, it should still not be restricted to those things that have been defined in the obvious decrees of the Oecumenical Councils or of the Roman Pontiffs or of this See, but must also be extended to that which is taught as divinely revealed by the ordinary *magisterium* of the entire Church spread throughout the world and which, as a result, is presented as belonging to the faith according to the common and constant agreement of the Catholic theologians.

But, on the matter of that subjection to which all Catholics who are engaged in the work of the speculative sciences are obliged in conscience, so that, by their writings, they may bring new advantages to the Church, the members of this assembly [a convention of German theologians] must take cognizance of the fact that it is not enough for them to receive and to venerate the above-mentioned dogmas of the Church, but that it is also necessary that they subject themselves to the doctrinal decisions of the Pontifical Congregations and to those points of doctrine that are considered by the common and constant agreement of Catholics as theological truths and conclusions which are so certain that opinions opposed to these points of doctrine still merit some other theological censure, even though they may not be designated as heretical.[2]

The directions given almost a hundred years ago by Pope Pius IX are just as valid and necessary now as they were when the *Tuas libenter* was first written. It is and it always will be

[1] The Latin text of *Humani generis* is carried in *The American Ecclesiastical Review,* CXXIII, 5 (Nov., 1950), 383-98. The paragraph here quoted is n. 20, p. 389. Subsequent references to *The American Ecclesiastical Review* will use the abbreviation *AER.*

[2] Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum,* 30th edition (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder, 1954), nn. 1683 f. Further references to the *Enchiridion symbolorum* in this volume will use the abbreviation *Denz.*

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the duty and the privilege of the Catholic to accept and to enjoy the body of truth given to the faithful in the official declarations of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*.[3] And, from a study of the eight documents cited in the first part of this book, we can see exactly what the Catholic *magisterium* has taught about the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation.

[3] For a more extensive treatment of this subject cf. Fenton, "The *Humani generis* and the Holy Father's Ordinary *Magisterium*," in *AER*, CXXV, 1 (July, 1951), 53-62.

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I

THE FOURTH OECUMENICAL COUNCIL OF THE LATERAN

In the *Firmiter*, the first chapter of the doctrinal declarations of the Fourth Lateran Council, we find the following declaration: "There is, then, one universal Church of the faithful (*una . . . fidelium universalis ecclesia*), outside of which no one at all is saved (*extra quam nullus omnino salvatur*)." [1]

This formula bears a singular resemblance to one contained in the profession of faith prescribed by Pope Innocent III in 1208 for the Waldensians who wished to return to the Catholic Church: "We believe in our hearts and we profess orally that there is one Church, not that of the heretics, but the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic [Church], outside of which we believe that no one will be saved." [2]

Each of these documents presents three distinct statements as truths actually revealed by God, and consequently as doctrines which men are obliged to accept with the assent of divine faith itself. By immediate and necessary implication, they condemn as heretical the teachings contradictory to these three dogmas of the Catholic faith. They assert that:

(1) It is a divinely revealed truth that there is only one true *ecclesia* or Church of God.

(2) It is a divinely revealed truth that this one true *ecclesia* is the Roman Catholic Church, the social unit properly termed "the universal Church of the faithful."

(3) No one at all, according to God's own revelation, can be saved if, at the moment of his death, he is "outside" this society.

As a result, according to the teaching of these documents, it would be heretical to imagine that there is more than one

[1] *Denz.*, 430.

[2] *Denz.*, 423.

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social unit in this world that can be designated as God's true *ecclesia*, that the Roman Catholic Church is not this true *ecclesia*, or that any person could attain to salvation outside of the Roman Catholic Church.

In a study like ours, the special value of these two documents is to be found in the fact that they place the dogma of the Church's necessity for the attainment of salvation against its proper background, and that they, particularly the statement of the Lateran Council, bring out clearly the real and complete necessity of the Church according to the actual designs of God's providence.

These two declarations of the teaching Church during the pontificate of Pope Innocent III set the dogma of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation in its only proper perspective precisely because they state this teaching against the background of the divinely revealed truths that there is only one true supernatural kingdom of God (or *ecclesia*) in the world, and that this *ecclesia* is the Roman Catholic Church. The true supernatural kingdom of God on earth, God's *ecclesia*, is something definable and understandable in terms of its necessity for the attainment of the Beatific Vision. If we are to understand the terminology of the teaching set forth by the Fourth Council of the Lateran, we must realize that the men who drew up this profession of faith and all the men of the thirteenth century, both Catholics and heretics, were well aware of the fact that "the social unit outside of which no one at all is saved" and "the true Church or kingdom of God" are objectively identical. The heretics denied that the social unit over which the Bishop of Rome presides as visible head is actually the true *ecclesia* of God described in the Scriptures. But they certainly would not and did not question the fact that, wherever it was to be found, this true *ecclesia* is the company outside of which no one at all may attain the possession of the Beatific Vision.

For all of these men, Catholics and heretics alike, the genuine Church of God was the company of His chosen people, the people of His covenant. It was the company of those who

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professed their acceptance of the divine and supernatural law by which God directs men to the attainment of the one ultimate and eternal happiness available to them, the happiness which is to be obtained only in the possession of the Beatific Vision. The true Church was the beneficiary of God's promises. It was the repository of His supernatural revelation. It dwelt in this world as in a place of pilgrimage, awaiting the glory of the fatherland of heaven.

They knew that the Church triumphant in heaven was to be the continuation and the flowering of the Church militant now existing on this earth, and that the people of the Church triumphant were, in point of fact, the people who had passed from this life "within" the Church militant and living the life of sanctifying grace. Thus they saw that the Church militant was actually something understandable in terms of necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation.

The profession of faith of the Fourth Lateran Council and the formula which the returning Waldensians were obliged to accept both insisted upon the unity and the unicity of the Church outside of which no one can be saved. Both asserted that this *ecclesia*, definable and understandable as the social unit outside of which no one can attain eternal salvation, is the religious society over which the Bishop of Rome presides. The profession of faith for the returning Waldensians states that this *ecclesia* of God is not the Church of the heretics, but that it is "the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic" Church. The *Firmiter* teaches exactly the same thing when it asserts that this one *ecclesia* outside of which no one at all is saved is the "one universal Church of the faithful."

The term *fidelis* had and still has a definite technical meaning in the language of Christianity. The *fideles*, or the faithful, are not merely the individuals who have made an act of divine faith in accepting the teachings of God's public and Christian revelation. They are actually those who have made the baptismal profession of faith, and who have not cut themselves off from the unity of the Church by public apostasy or heresy or schism and have not been cast out of the Church

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by the process of excommunication. In other words, according to the present terminology of sacred theology, the *fidelis* is simply the Catholic, the member of the Catholic Church. Thus the Church of the faithful, the *universalis ecclesia fidelium*, is nothing but the visible Catholic Church itself. And the formula of the Fourth Council of the Lateran tells us that this *ecclesia fidelium* is the one supernatural kingdom of God on earth, the company outside of which no one at all can attain eternal salvation.

Actually, in the traditional language of the Church, the term *christianus* itself had a wider application than the word *fidelis*. A catechumen might be designated as a *christianus*, but never as a *fidelis*.[3] A man gained the dignity and the position of a *fidelis* through the reception of the sacrament of baptism. This sacrament is precisely the sacrament of the faith. By the force of the character it imparts, it incorporates the person who receives it into that community which is the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. The effect of that incorporation is broken only by public heresy or apostasy, by schism, or by the full measure of excommunication. The man in whom the incorporating work of the baptismal character remains unbroken is the *fidelis*, the member of the Catholic Church. The social unit composed of these *fideles* is, according to the teaching of the Fourth Lateran Council, the true Church, outside which no one at all is saved.

Now, the Council teaches that a man must be in some way "within" the Church of the faithful in order to be saved. It does not, however, in any way teach or even imply that no one other than one of the *fideles* can actually attain to the Beatific Vision. And, for that matter, no other authoritative declaration of the Church issues such a teaching or supports any such implication. It is not, and it has never been, the teaching of the Catholic Church that only actual members of the Church can attain eternal salvation. According to the teaching of the Church's own *magisterium*, salvation can be

[3] Cf. Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrétien* (Paris, 1898), p. 281; and Fenton, "Faith and the Church," in *AER*, CXX, 1 (Jan., 1949), 60.

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attained and, as a matter of fact, has been attained by persons who, at the moment of their death, were not members of this Church. The Church has thus never confused the notion of being " outside the Church " with that of being a non-member of this society.

Thus the Fathers of the Fourth Lateran Council and all the other churchmen who have drawn up authoritative statements of the Church's teaching on the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation were well aware of what St. Augustine had taught about men who suffered martyrdom for the sake of Christ before having had the opportunity to receive the sacrament of baptism. In his *De civitate Dei*, St. Augustine taught that " whosoever dies for Christ, not having received the laver of regeneration, has this avail him for the forgiveness of sins as much as if these sins had been forgiven in the sacred font of baptism." [4] Since the forgiveness of mortal or original sin is accomplished only in the infusion of the life of sanctifying grace, the person whose sins are forgiven is in the state of grace. If such a person dies in the state of grace, he will inevitably attain to the Beatific Vision. He will be saved, as having died " within " and not " outside " the true Church.

Furthermore, they knew that there is no such thing as real membership in the Church militant of the New Testament, the true and only *ecclesia fidelium*, apart from the reception of the sacrament of baptism. Thus, when the Fathers of the Fourth Oecumenical Council of the Lateran, and the other authoritative teachers of the Catholic Church, followed St. Augustine in holding that a man could be saved if he dies as a martyr for Our Lord while still unbaptized, they were clearly showing that, in their declarations that no one can be saved outside the Church, they did not mean that only members of the Church may obtain the Beatific Vision. The unbaptized martyr for Our Lord passed from this life " within " the *ecclesia fidelium*, despite the fact that he died without having attained the status of *fidelis*.

[4] *De civitate Dei*, XIII, 7. *MPL*, XLI, 381.

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Again, the Fathers of the Fourth Oecumenical Council of the Lateran were well aware of the fact that an unbaptized man could be saved even if he did not die a martyr's death. All of them accepted as Catholic doctrine the teaching St. Ambrose had set forth in his sermon *De obitu Valentiniani*:

> But I hear that you are sorrowing because he [the Emperor Valentinian II] did not receive the rites of baptism. Tell me, what else is there in us but will, but petition? Now, quite recently it was his intention to be baptized before coming into Italy. He let it be known that he wanted to be baptized by me very shortly, and it was for that reason, above all others, that he decided to have me sent for. Does he not, then, have the grace he desired? Does he not have what he prayed for? Surely, because he prayed for it, he has received it. Hence it is that " the soul of the just man will be at rest, whatever kind of death may overtake him." [5]

St. Ambrose was speaking of an instance in which a man who had been a catechumen had died before he had an opportunity to receive the sacrament of baptism. He had passed from this life, then, as a non-member of the *ecclesia fidelium*. At the moment of his death he was not one of the *fideles*. Yet, according to St. Ambrose, this man had died a good death. He had prayed for the grace of baptism, and God had given him this answer to his prayer.[6] He had passed from this life " within " rather than " outside " the Church of the faithful. He had been able to attain eternal salvation.

Such was the doctrinal background against which the Fathers of the Fourth Lateran Council issued their teaching on the necessity of the Catholic Church for the attainment of the Beatific Vision. They believed that non-members of the Catholic Church could achieve salvation. Thus, when they taught that no one at all could be saved " outside " the one Church of the faithful, they obviously did not mean to say that being outside of the Church was equivalent to being a non-member of this social unit.

On the other hand, they just as obviously did not mean

[5] *De obitu Valentiniani*, 51. *MPL*, XVI, 1374.

[6] Cf. Fenton, " The Necessity of the Church and the Efficacy of Prayer," in *AER*, CXXXII, 5 (May, 1955), 336-49.

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that being a member of the Church, or even desiring to enter the Church, constituted any absolute guarantee of salvation. It is unfortunately possible to have a man die as a member of the true Church, and die in the state of mortal sin. It is likewise possible to have a man actually desire to enter the Church, and die before he has the opportunity to be baptized, and to have that man lose his soul through some other offense against God. In other words, it is possible for a man to lose his soul if he dies "within" the Church. The Fourth General Council of the Lateran brought out the fact that it is absolutely impossible to attain to eternal salvation if a man passes from this life "outside" the true Church.

Thus, according to the infallibly true teaching of this section of the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, we may draw the following conclusions:

(1) At the moment of death a man must be in some way "within" the Catholic Church (either as a member or as one who desires and prays to enter it) if he is to attain to eternal salvation.

(2) There is absolutely no exception to this rule. Otherwise the statement that "no one at all (*nullus omnino*)" is saved outside of the one universal Church of the faithful would not be true. And that statement is true. It is an infallible dogmatic pronouncement of an Oecumenical Council of the Catholic Church.

(3) Any attempt to explain the Church's necessity for salvation by claiming that it is only the "ordinary" means, or by imagining that it is requisite only for those who are aware of its dignity and position, is completely false and unacceptable.

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II

THE BULL *UNAM SANCTAM*

The second of eight documents of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* with which we are concerned in this section is the famous Bull *Unam sanctam*, issued by Pope Boniface VIII on November 18, 1302. The opening and the closing passages of this pontifical pronouncement contain highly important statements of the dogma.

The opening section of the *Unam sanctam* states the dogma itself and gives insights into it not available in any previous declaration of the teaching Church.

We are bound by the obligation of faith to believe and to hold the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church, and we firmly believe and sincerely profess this [Church] outside of which there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins (*extra quam nec salus est, nec remissio peccatorum*). Thus, the spouse in the Canticle proclaims: "One is my dove: my perfect one is but one. She is the only one of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her." This signifies (*repraesentat*) the one Mystical Body, of which Christ is the Head, and God [is the Head] of Christ. In this [dove and perfect one] there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Certainly there was one ark of Noe at the time of the deluge, and it prefigured the one Church. The ark, which was finished in one cubit, has one ruler and commander, namely Noe. We read that all things that subsisted on the earth and which were outside of the ark were destroyed. And we venerate this [Church] as the only one, since the Lord says in the Prophet: "Deliver, O God, my soul from the sword: my only one from the hand of the dog." The Lord prayed for the Soul—that is, for Himself the Head—and at the same time for the body. He called the only Church a body because of the unity of faith, the unity of the sacraments, and the unity of charity of the Church, the Spouse. This [Church] is the Lord's seamless robe which was not cut, but for which lots were cast. Therefore there is one body, one Head, of the only Church, not two heads like a monster; Christ and Peter, the Vicar of Christ, and Peter's successor, since the Lord said to Peter himself: "Feed my sheep." He says "my" [sheep] universally, and not "these" or "those" in particular, and thus it is understood that He entrusted all [His sheep] to him. If, there-

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fore, the Greeks or others say that they have not been entrusted to Peter and to his successors, they necessarily admit that they are not of the sheep of Christ, since the Lord says, in John, that there is one fold and one shepherd.[1]

The first section of the *Unam sanctam* contains the statement of the dogma and three tremendously valuable explanations. The necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation is described in terms of the relation of the supernatural life of sanctifying grace to salvation itself, in terms of the unity and the unicity of God's true *ecclesia*, and in terms of the visibility of that *ecclesia* in the condition of the New Testament.

The statement of the dogma in the *Unam sanctam* differs somewhat from its assertion in the *Firmiter*. In the older document we find the statement that no one at all is saved outside the Catholic Church. The *Unam sanctam*, on the other hand, teaches us that salvation itself is not to be found outside this company. Quite obviously both of these propositions bring out the same meaning. They insist that the process of salvation is something found within the true kingdom of God on earth, and that a man has to be in some way within this social unit if he is to obtain this divine gift.

The first of the explanations offered here in the *Unam sanctam*, the teaching that neither salvation nor the remission of sins can be obtained outside the Catholic Church, is essentially important for the proper understanding of the doctrine of the necessity of the Church. The remission of sins, original or mortal, is an absolutely necessary part of the process of salvation for the men of this world. In teaching us that this first salvation cannot take place outside of God's supernatural kingdom on earth, Pope Boniface VIII has focussed our attention on the nature of salvation itself.

Considered actively or as a process, salvation consists in saving a man, in transferring him from a bad condition, one in which the continuation of life is impossible, to a situation of security and enjoyment. In this way a man is saved if he

[1] *Denz.*, 468.

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is taken off a sinking ship and brought to another vessel in seaworthy condition, and thence to his home ashore. Considered objectively, salvation is the benefit received by the man who is saved.

In the vocabulary of the faith and of sacred theology, the process of salvation takes place when a man is removed from the condition of spiritual death, or of original or mortal sin, and transferred to the condition in which he enjoys the supernatural friendship of God and the possession of the life of supernatural grace. This process is brought to its final termination when, in the possession of Beatific Vision, the man saved attains the ultimate and unending perfection of the life of grace, and is forever exempt from the danger of losing it.

Thus, absolutely and ultimately, salvation in the theological order is to be found in the attainment of the Beatific Vision. The word is employed in this sense in the statement that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church. But, for every individual who comes into this world in the state of original sin, the forgiveness of original or mortal sin is an integral and absolutely necessary part of the process of salvation. The most important lesson taught in the *Unam sanctam* is the truth that this remission of sin, original or mortal, cannot be obtained outside the one supernatural kingdom of God here on earth, the society which we know as the Catholic Church.

In order to understand this aspect of the mystery of the Church, we must take cognizance of the fact, presented to us in Catholic doctrine, that the Beatific Vision is a vital act, the ultimate and perfective expression of a genuinely supernatural life. Furthermore, we must also realize that in reality, by God's own institution, there is no situation available to men other than the sinful aversion from God or the possession of the supernatural life of sanctifying grace.

The Supernatural Order

The salvation to which the Catholic Church refers when it teaches the dogma of its own necessity is inherently and essentially a supernatural thing. The Beatific Vision, in the acquisi-

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tion of which the process of salvation is completed, is the direct and clear intellectual apprehension of God in the Trinity of His Persons. As such, it is an act absolutely beyond the natural power or competence or exigencies of any creature, actual or possible. It is the kind of operation which may be called natural only to God Himself.

An act is said to be natural to some being when it lies within the area of his natural competence. In terms of understanding or intelligence (and it is within the framework of understanding that the ultimate distinction between the natural and the intrinsically supernatural must be discerned), an act is natural when it is the apprehension of some reality within the sphere of the proper object of that creature's intelligence.

It is not too difficult to see this in terms of an example. The proper object of the human intelligence, precisely as such, is to be found in the essences or natures of material things. Man is definable as a rational animal. His natural activity is on the plane of his own being. He is naturally constituted so as to be able to understand the realities which he perceives through the activity of his sense faculties. What he is naturally able to understand is basically and primarily the world of being of which he is made aware by that sense activity which is natural to him.

His intellectual activity is truly a knowledge of being. He is able to know, through his understanding of the sensible realities that lie within the sphere of being that constitutes the proper object of his human intelligence, that these realities could not be as they are and act as they do unless they were being kept in existence and in operation by an absolutely First Cause. By the employment of the processes of removal and excellence, he is able to understand what this First Cause is not, and how it can be accurately, even though inadequately, designated by human concepts and words. Ultimately, working along the lines of this natural human intellectual activity, man can arrive at the stage of natural intellectual perfection in which he becomes aware, precisely in and through his realization and recognition of the essences of material things,

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of the beauty and order of the universe, with its dazzling multitude of creatures depending upon God and working for His glory.

There can be, and there truly are, intellectual creatures completely superior to man. Yet, in every case, these creatures must inevitably and necessarily have their natural intellectual activity on the plane of their own being. Every creature, as a creature, is a being in which existence is something really distinct from essence. There is and there can be no creature which exists necessarily. All have received, and continue to receive, whatever being they possess from God Himself.

Hence the proper formal object of the intelligence of any creature, actual or possible, is necessarily something on the created level. From the examination of the reality within the compass of that proper formal object, any intellectual creature is able to arrive at a knowledge of God insofar as He is knowable as the First Cause of creatures. The clarity and profundity of this knowledge will be more perfect in proportion as the created intellect itself is more perfect. Thus the natural knowledge of God by a created pure spirit would be immensely better than any natural knowledge of Him available to man, a rational animal. But this natural knowledge of God by a created pure spirit would, in the last analysis, remain within the range of understanding of God known through an examination of the effects He has produced in the created universe. This would mean an intellectual knowledge of God in the unity of His Nature, but not of the Blessed Trinity.

On the other hand, there is a type of knowledge of God which is natural only to God Himself. In the infinitely perfect act of understanding which is in no way really distinct from Himself, the Triune God sees Himself perfectly in the Trinity of His Persons, really distinct from one another, but subsisting in one and the same divine nature with which each of the three Persons is identified.

The basic truth about God's dealings with His intellectual creatures is to be found in the fact that it has pleased His goodness and wisdom to endow these intellectual creatures

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with the kind of knowledge of Him which He possesses Himself. Thus, for the created pure spirits (the angels), and for the entire human race, God has established an end or a final perfection completely distinct from and superior to the final end to which these intellectual creatures would naturally have been ordered. By the force of His decree the only ultimate and eternal perfection and beatitude available to these intellectual creatures is this intrinsically supernatural good, the knowledge and the possession of Himself in the Trinity of the Divine Persons in the clarity of the Beatific Vision.

This immediate intellectual cognizance of God in the Trinity of His Persons is, by its very essence, something above and beyond the natural needs and deserts of intellectual creatures. Furthermore, it is a vital act, accompanied by and belonging with a complexus of other acts which, taken together, constitute a true supernatural life. The love of friendship for God, as understood in the Trinity of His Persons, is one of those acts.

Now, the second truth about the supernatural order is the fact that God, in His wisdom and goodness, has willed to give the Beatific Vision to His intellectual creatures as something which they have earned or merited. Quite obviously this benefit is not to be earned through the performance of any activity on a merely natural plane. The only kind of activity which can truly merit the Beatific Vision is activity within the supernatural order itself, the working of the essentially supernatural life. Hence, for every intellectual creature called to the possession and enjoyment of the Beatific Vision, there is a period in which this life of the Beatific Vision is meant to be lived in a preparatory or militant stage. For the children of Adam, this period is to be found in the life in this world.

Hence God wills that men should live and grow in the life of the Beatific Vision in this world so as to be able to merit the eternal possession and enjoyment of the Triune God in the world to come. In this period of trial and preparation it is quite obvious that the Beatific Vision itself is not available. The thing being merited is not being enjoyed while it is

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being merited. Consequently, during the period of this life, the supernatural awareness of God which guides and enlightens the supernatural life is that of divine faith. This consists in the certain acceptance of God's own message about Himself and about the eternal and salvific decrees of His providence in our regard. It is essentially supernatural, in that it tells us of God in the Trinity of His Persons. Faith is intrinsically a preparation and a substitute for the Beatific Vision itself, since it conveys information about that very Reality which we hope eventually to understand and to see in the glory of the Beatific Vision. At the same time it is completely distinct from and superior to any merely natural knowledge about God.

The love of charity which will accompany the Beatific Vision in the saints for all eternity also is meant to accompany the act and the virtue of divine faith in this world. And, where this charity is present, the supernatural life itself exists and operates. Where it is not present, there is no supernatural life, although faith and hope may still exist.

The immediate supernatural principles of the supernatural life in this world are the various infused theological and moral virtues and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. The ultimate intrinsic and created supernatural principle of this life is the quality which we call sanctifying grace. This quality acts as the ultimate intrinsic created principle of the supernatural life in this world and in the next.

Now the process of salvation consists primarily in the bestowal of this life of sanctifying grace upon a person who has hitherto not possessed it. Ultimately it consists in the granting of the Beatific Vision to this individual. For, according to God's own institution, as He has made this known to us in the message He has revealed to us in Jesus Christ His Son, the life of sanctifying grace in heaven, the life of the Beatific Vision itself, can be enjoyed only as the continuation and the fruition of the life of grace which has begun to operate in this world, and which is existent at the very moment when the individual passes from this life to the next. The only

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men who will see God in heaven are those who have passed from this life in the state of grace.

Thus there are two factors to be considered in the bestowal of the Beatific Vision. The first is the giving of the life of grace to the person in this world. The second is the actual attainment of the clear understanding and possession of the Triune God in heaven. It is the teaching of the *Unam sanctam* that both of these factors or benefits are available only within the Catholic Church.

The Terminus *a quo* in the Process of Salvation

The gift which the documents of the Church designate as "salvation" is the Beatific Vision, the ultimate flowering of the supernatural life of sanctifying grace which must begin to exist in this world. A man is said to be saved, ultimately, when he receives this supernatural benefit of the Beatific Vision. The term "salvation," however, involves more than this.

The key fact which must be taken into consideration in any theological explanation of salvation is the truth that actually the bestowal of the life of sanctifying grace is inseparable from the remission of original or mortal sin in the world in which we live. There have been cases in which this was not so. Our Lord, in His human nature, possessed in a completely perfect manner all the gifts of sanctifying grace and, both by reason of the divinity of His Person and by reason of the fact that He was not descended from Adam by a process of carnal generation, He was never in any way stained with the guilt of sin. His Blessed Mother was immaculately conceived. By the pre-applied merits of His Passion and death, she was preserved free from any taint of sin from the very moment she began to exist. In her case, also, the granting of the gift of sanctifying grace was not accompanied by any remission of sin. With her, the beginning of existence coincided with the beginning of the supernatural life of sanctifying grace. Likewise, Adam and Eve, before the Fall, were constituted in grace from the first moment of their existence. With them, however,

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the second granting of the life of grace was brought about in and through the remission of sin.

In every one of their descendants this same thing has occurred, except for the cases of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. Mary excepted, every person born into the family of Adam through the process of carnal generation has come into this world in the state of original sin. Both this original sin and the mortal sins men commit during the course of their lives are incompatible with the life of grace. And, by the institution of God Himself, the stain of sin can be removed only by the granting of the life of grace.

The state of sin, original or mortal, is a state of aversion from or enmity with God. The removal of that state is accomplished when, and only when, the person who has hitherto been in the state of sin is constituted in the condition of friendship with God and is properly ordered to Him. And there is no situation other than that of sanctifying grace itself in which a man can be well ordered toward God.

To be well ordered toward God, or to be in a state of friendship with Him, a man must be working toward the goal which God Himself has set for him. And, according to God's own revealed message, the one goal or end in the attainment of which man may find his ultimate and eternal beatitude is that of the Beatific Vision. There is no other ultimate end available to man. If he fails to attain this objective then, whatever he may seem to have accomplished during the course of his earthly life, he will have been forever a failure. There is no state of neutrality toward God, and there is no possible state of merely natural friendship with Him available to the children of Adam.

In other words, all and only the persons who are not in the state of grace are in the state of original or mortal sin. All and only the persons who are not in the state of original sin or mortal sin or both possess the life of sanctifying grace. Hence, according to God's own institution, the process by which a man who has hitherto not been in the state of grace receives this supernatural life from God is necessarily the

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process by which his original or mortal sin is forgiven. The *terminus a quo* of the transfer by which a man is brought into the state of supernatural grace is necessarily, for the children of Adam, the state of original or mortal sin.

Our Lord's Function in the Remission of Sin and the Granting of the Life of Grace

It is a basic and central part of God's revealed message that the remission of sin, the process in which the supernatural life of sanctifying grace is infused into a soul which has hitherto been deprived of it, is possible only through and in Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is in Our Lord, according to St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, that "we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace." [2] And St. Peter, in his first Epistle, speaks of "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory in Christ Jesus." [3] In fact one may say that the central message of the New Testament is the fact that salvation and the remission of sins are possible only in and through Our Lord.

By His suffering and death, He redeemed us and freed us from the bonds of our iniquities. The actual graces or divine aids by which a man is enabled to move towards the love of charity for God and the hatred of sin which come together at the moment of justification have been merited for us by Our Lord. So too are graces by which a man is effectively and freely moved to justification and to the increase in the life of grace acquired, along with the remission of sin, in the process of justification.

Moreover, justification, the actual transfer of a man from the state of original or mortal sin into the state of sanctifying grace, is possible only in Our Lord. Here the dogma of the Catholic Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation and for the remission of sin manifests itself as the clear and accurate statement of the meaning actually conveyed in the scriptural expression "in Christ Jesus." Neither justifica-

[2] *Eph.*, 1: 7. [3] *I Pet.*, 5: 10.

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tion nor glorification—that is, neither the remission of our sins nor the attainment of the Beatific Vision—is possible except "in Christ Jesus." And the Church, in the divinely inspired epistles of St. Paul, is represented precisely though metaphorically as "the body of Christ." To be "in Christ Jesus," then, is to be "within" the Mystical Body of Christ, Our Lord's one and only true Church or kingdom. And, just as justification and glorification are absolutely impossible other than "in Christ Jesus," they are likewise absolutely impossible "outside" His Mystical Body, which is the Church.

It is highly important for us to realize that, in asserting the dogma of its own necessity for salvation and for the living of the life of sanctifying grace, the Catholic Church is simply stating in a non-figurative fashion the very truth which Our Lord Himself expounded through His use of the metaphor of the vine and the branches. Our Lord taught:

> I am the true vine: and my Father is the husbandman.
> Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he will take away: and every one that beareth fruit, he will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit.
> Now you are clean, by reason of the word which I have spoken to you.
> Abide in me: and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me.
> I am the vine: you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.
> If any one abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither: and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire: and he burneth.
> If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will: and it shall be done unto you.
> In this is my Father glorified: that you bring forth very much fruit and become my disciples.[4]

Our Lord Himself explained the reality of this "abiding" in Him which was requisite for the life of grace and of salvation in the Eucharistic Discourse itself.

[4] *John*, 15: 1-8.

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Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say unto you: except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.

He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day.

For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed.

He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me: and I in him.

As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.[5]

Thus, according to this teaching by Our Lord, the beginning, the continuation, the development, and the eternal possession of the supernatural life, the life on the level of God rather than the mere natural life of the creature, is completely dependent upon abiding in Him. And, as He has clearly explained, the individual in whom Our Lord abides, and who dwells or abides in Our Lord, is the one who partakes of the Eucharistic banquet of Our Lord's Body and Blood. Quite obviously Our Lord is speaking in terms of a worthy reception of the Eucharist.

Now, by the divine constitution of the Church militant of the New Testament, this social unit is the one social unit within which men may partake worthily of the Eucharistic banquet. Our Lord's own *ecclesia* is the one and only company within which the Eucharist itself was instituted and for which it was intended. The Eucharistic sacrifice is offered, and the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is received rightly and properly only within this community. Conversely, any man who fruitfully and worthily partakes of this Eucharistic feast is within the true Church, at least by intention.

Our Lord's statement that "he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me: and I in him" is definitely not restricted to the physical reception of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. A spiritual reception of the Eucharist,

[5] *John*, 6: 54-59.

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which consists in a desire (even an implicit desire) to partake of the Sacrament and to profit from that reception is sufficient for this union with Our Lord in the case of a person for whom the actual reception or physical reception of the Sacrament is, for one reason or another, really impossible.

Thus, as Our Lord explains the matter, salvation and the supernatural life of sanctifying grace are possible for the member of the Church who is within this society as one of its integral parts, and who is vitally joined to Our Lord by the worthy reception of the Sacrament of His love. It is also possible for the Catholic who is unable physically to receive the Sacrament, but who, with a desire of the Sacrament and of its effects and with the intention of charity animating that desire, is integrated into the Church, the household of the living God, within which and for which that sacrifice is offered and that sacrament is confected. It is also possible for the non-member of the Church who, unable to attain membership in Christ's Mystical Body and enlightened by true and supernatural divine faith, loves God with the affection of true charity and, in that love, forms at least an implicit desire of the sacrament and of its salvific effects. In this last case the man who possesses this desire, presenting it to God in the form of prayer, will receive the guerdon he seeks, union with Our Lord in His company, which is the Church. The man is brought into the Church (though obviously not constituted as a member of the Church) and into spiritual and salvific reception of Our Lord's Body and Blood, through the force of his prayer and desire that are animated and motivated by divine charity.

This is the meaning of the teaching about the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation and for the remission of sins which has been brought out so powerfully and profoundly in the *Unam sanctam*. In this great document Pope Boniface VIII brings out his teaching principally by the use of two of the metaphorical scriptural names or designations of the Church. He employs the name and the notion of the Church as "Spouse of Christ" to show that those who are

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within the Church are within the reality which may be said to constitute one body with Him. And he employs the term "Mystical Body" to designate the Church as the social unit within which alone there is intimate and salvific contact with Our Divine Redeemer. And thus, in his enunciation and explanation of the dogma, he brings out, in the technically expressive terminology of sacred theology, the very lesson which Our Lord brought out so forcefully in the figurative language He used in teaching His disciples.

The Dogma and the Error of Quesnel

When the *Unam sanctam* teaches us that there can be no remission of sins outside the Catholic Church, it is telling us, actually, that it is impossible to obtain the life of sanctifying grace or to live that life outside this supernatural kingdom of God. It is bringing out the divinely revealed truth that, by God's own institution, the life of sanctifying grace is to be possessed and derived from Our Lord by those who are united with Him, abiding in Him, in His Mystical Body, which is the Catholic Church.

We must be especially clear, both in our concepts and in our terminology, on this point. What the *Unam sanctam* certainly implies, in declaring the necessity of the Church for the remission of sins, is the truth that the life of sanctifying grace and the supernatural *habitus* of sanctifying grace can be obtained and possessed only within the Church. In the light of Catholic doctrine, however, it is both certain and obvious that actual graces are really offered to and received by men who are definitely "outside the Church," in the sense in which this expression is employed in the ecclesiastical documents which state the dogma of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation. As a matter of fact the proposition that "no grace is granted outside the Church (*extra ecclesiam nulla conceditur gratia*)" is one of the theses condemned explicitly by Pope Clement XI in his dogmatic constitution

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Unigenitus, issued September 8, 1713, and directed against the teachings of Pasquier Quesnel.[6]

It is certain with the certitude of divine faith itself that actual graces are really necessary to prepare men for and to move them to the very acts by which they come to be "within the Church." Thus, in the light of Catholic teaching, it is obvious that these graces are offered and granted to men who are really outside the Church, lacking both real membership in the supernatural kingdom of God and any real desire of membership.

Except in the case of a true moral miracle, such as that which occurred in the instantaneous conversion of St. Paul, the process of justification (which can terminate only within the true Church) is preceded by a series of acts which, together, constitute the preparation for justification. In a famous chapter of its decree on justification the Council of Trent has listed and briefly explained some of these acts, as they occur in the case of one who has hitherto lacked the true faith. Under this heading it speaks of acts of faith, of salutary fear, of hope, of initial love of God, and of pre-baptismal penance. The process of preparation for justification, according to this chapter, ends with the intention to receive baptism, to begin a new life, and to observe God's commandments.[7]

Now an unbaptized person who has not the Christian faith is in no sense within the Catholic Church. He does not begin to be within it, either as a member or as one who sincerely desires to become a member, even when he makes his initial act of faith. Yet, according to the clear and infallibly true teaching of the Catholic Church, divine grace is absolutely requisite, not only for the eliciting of the act of faith itself, but even for what the Second Council of Orange calls the "*affectus credulitatis*," [8] the disposition or the willingness to believe. This actual grace is definitely given to men who are outside the Church. And thus the assertion that no grace is granted outside the Church is completely incompatible with Catholic teaching, even though it is Catholic doctrine

[6] *Denz.*, 1379. [7] Cf. *Denz.*, 798. [8] Cf. *Denz.*, 178.

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that the life of supernatural grace itself is not to be obtained or possessed outside the Church.

The Church's Unity and Unicity

The basic teaching of this opening section of the *Unam sanctam* is the truth that the supernatural life of sanctifying grace can neither begin nor continue apart from and outside Our Lord's Mystical Body. Thus it constitutes a powerful and supremely accurate commentary on those passages of Sacred Scripture which show us that the supernatural life of grace cannot exist other than in and through Our Lord, and thus in His company, the society which was and is so intimately joined to Our Saviour that persecution of it was described by Him as persecution of Himself.

The presentation of this truth is made especially forceful in this document by its insistence that this community, outside which there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins, is genuinely one and unique. Pope Boniface VIII appeals to scriptural images, like that of the ark of Noe and the seamless robe of Christ. He adduces the teaching in the Canticle of Canticles that the beloved, the figure of the Church, is truly and only one. He appeals to the fact that in the Church there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and to the bonds of unity existing within the Church. Finally, he points to the unity of the Church's leadership, exercised by the Bishop of Rome by the authority and in the name of one spiritual and supreme Head, Jesus Christ.

In thus insisting on the unity of the company outside which there is no salvation, the *Unam sanctam* brings out the supremely practical implication of the dogma. The Church within which men must enter and dwell if they are to attain the remission of their sins and the possession and final flowering of the supernatural life is definitely one community, undivided in itself, and quite distinct from every other social unit in existence. This one company is the *ecclesia* which all must seek to enter, and within which they must remain if they are to be pleasing to God in this world and in the next. The

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dogma of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation, as seen in this light, is certainly not an affair of mere theory or speculation, but a truth which men must accept as revealed by God Himself, and which they must use as a guiding principle of their own lives.

The Church's Visibility

The intensely practical presentation of the dogma in the *Unam sanctam* is increased by this document's insistence on the visibility of the one society within which alone men may find salvation and the forgiveness of their sins. The true Church which is necessary for the attainment of salvation is the one society over which Peter and his successors rule by Our Lord's own commission. Our Lord confided all of His sheep, all of the people whom the Father had given to Him to be brought to eternal life, to the care of Peter. Those individuals who describe themselves as not confided to St. Peter and his successors, and thus are not owing obedience to them, characterize themselves as not being among the sheep of Christ. They show themselves to be outside the company within which alone there is salvific contact with Our Lord.

This strong and realistic teaching of the *Unam sanctam* is most perfectly manifested in the definition in which this document ends.

> Hence We declare, state, define, and assert that for every human creature submission to the Roman Pontiff (*subesse Romano Pontifici*) is absolutely necessary for salvation (*omnino de necessitate salutis*).[9]

During our own times, prior to the issuance of the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, there was a manifest tendency on the part of some Catholic writers to teach the existence of a so-called "invisible Church," in some way distinct from the organization over which the Roman Pontiff presides, and to ascribe to this imaginary entity the necessity for salvation. The closing sentence of the *Unam sanctam* had long ago rendered this position absolute untenable from a theological

[9] *Denz.*, 469.

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point of view. As this document showed most clearly, the Church outside which there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins is, in fact, the society over which the Roman Pontiff presides as the Vicar of Christ and as the successor of St. Peter. It is the society designated by the Bellarminian definition of the true Church, as the assembly of men united in the profession of the same Christian faith and by the communion of the same sacraments, under the rule of the legitimate pastors, and especially of the Roman Pontiff, the one Vicar of Christ on earth.[10]

These points are brought out with particular clarity in the *Unam sanctam*:

(1) The Church is necessary, not only for the attainment of salvation itself, but for the forgiveness of sins, which is inseparable from the granting of the supernatural life of sanctifying grace.

(2) The Church is necessary for the attainment of salvation and of the life of grace precisely because it is the Body and the Spouse of Jesus Christ.

(3) Attainment of salvation in the Church involves union with the Bishop of Rome.

(4) The dogma of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation cannot be explained accurately in terms of any "invisible Church."

[10] Cf. *De ecclesia militante*, c. 2.

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III

THE DECREE FOR THE JACOBITES

The seventeenth in the series of Oecumenical Councils was that of Florence. It was a gathering called to end some long-standing separations of Oriental dissident groups from the true Church. One of its acts was the famed decree for the Jacobites, included in the dogmatic Bull *Cantate Domino*, issued by Pope Eugenius IV on February 4, 1442. The following paragraph is found in this decree.

> It [the sacrosanct Roman Church, established by the voice of Our Lord and Saviour] firmly believes, professes, and teaches that none of those who do not exist within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but Jews, heretics, and schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life; but that they are going into the everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels, unless they become associated with it (*nisi . . . eidem fuerint aggregati*) before they die. And [it firmly believes, professes, and teaches] that the unity of the ecclesiastical body is of such value that the Church's sacraments are profitable unto salvation, and that fastings, almsgivings, and the other duties of piety and exercises of the Christian militancy, bring forth eternal rewards only for those who remain within it [the unity of the ecclesiastical body]: and that, however great his almsgiving may be, and even though he might shed his blood for the name of Christ, no one can be saved unless he remains within the embrace and the unity of the Catholic Church.[1]

Actually this declaration of the *Cantate Domino* simply makes more explicit the lessons brought out in the Fourth Lateran Council and in the Bull *Unam sanctam*. First of all, it mentions and classifies those who are outside of the true Church. These include the pagans, who do not accept any part of divine public revelation; the Jews, who accept the Old Testament as God's message; the heretics, who accept certain parts of the teaching contained in the New Testament; and finally the schismatics, who have not rejected any portion

[1] *Denz.*, 714.

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of the divinely revealed message, but who simply have cut themselves off from communion with the true Church. It insists that none of these people can attain to eternal life unless they enter the true Church before they pass from this world. In issuing this teaching, the *Cantate Domino* simply repeated, with a little more explicitness about the individuals who are "outside" the Church, what previous documents had already taught about the necessity of the Catholic Church for the attainment of eternal salvation.

This is plain in both the first and the second parts of the teaching on this subject set forth in the *Cantate Domino*. The first part asserts that the various classes of individuals "outside" the Catholic Church not only cannot become partakers of eternal life, but also that "they are going into the everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels" unless they become united to the Church before they pass from this world. In this assertion, which, incidentally, has been designated as "rigorous" by opponents of the Church and by some badly instructed Catholics, Pope Eugenius IV merely took cognizance of the reality of Our Lord's work of redemption.

Now, the alternative to being saved is being lost. The person who is saved is, in the ultimate and perfect sense, the one who finally attains to the Beatific Vision through the salvific power of Our Lord's sacrificial death. The person who is not saved is inevitably one who is debarred for all eternity from the possession of the Beatific Vision, in which alone the ultimate and eternal end of man is to be found. The individual who attains the one and only ultimate end available to man will have been a shining success for all eternity, whatever sufferings and humiliations he may have been called upon to undergo during the period of his preparation and trial in this world. On the other hand, the person who does not attain to that end will have been a failure for all eternity, despite any success and pleasure he may have had during the course of his earthly life.

Furthermore, no one is excluded from the everlasting pos-

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session of the Beatific Vision except for reasons of sin. In the case of an infant who has died without receiving the sacrament of baptism, that sin is not personal, but is original sin, the aversion from God which is consequent upon the offense committed by Adam himself. Obviously, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church, an infant who dies in that state will not be punished by the all-just and all-merciful God for some sin which he did not personally commit. But, for such an infant, the Beatific Vision is a good to which the infant is not entitled and which he will not receive.

The adult who dies in the state of mortal sin, whether his original sin has been remitted in the sacrament of baptism or not, will not only be excluded from the possession of the Beatific Vision, but will also be punished for his unrepented offenses against God. And, since there is no forgiveness of sin apart from the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, there is no salvation for the individual who passes from this life "outside" the Catholic Church. The person who dies with unremitted mortal sins against God will not only be excluded from the Beatific Vision (thus suffering the penalty of loss), but will also receive the punishment due to the sin for which he has not repented (the penalty of sense).

Our Lord is our Divine Saviour precisely because, through His sacrificial death on Calvary, He has earned for us the salvation from our sins, both original and actual. Now, the salvation which He merited for us was precisely a rescue from our sins and from the effects consequent upon them. Those effects are principally the loss of God's friendship; subjection to Satan, the prince of this world; the eternal loss of the Beatific Vision; and the punishments of hell. Our Lord did not suffer the tortures and the ignominy of the most horrible of deaths to win any unimportant favor for us.

The key truth in all of this portion of sacred theology is the fact that the Catholic Church is actually the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. In order to be saved from the condition in which we are born into the world, and the condition in which we place ourselves by our own mortal sins, we must

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be in salvific contact with our Divine Redeemer. And the one and only social unit within which this salvific contact can be made is the institution which St. Paul designated as the Body of Christ, the society we know as the Catholic Church.

The people who do not come into salvific contact with Our Lord do not avail themselves of the salvation which is in Him alone. As a result they are not saved, and they remain in the condition in which they have come into the world, or in the condition in which they have placed themselves through their own personal and mortal sins. If they die in this condition, they inevitably receive the effects which follow upon their condition. They are excluded from the Beatific Vision and, if they pass from this life guilty of mortal sin for which they have not been repentant, they suffer the pain of hell forever.

This is the section of Catholic doctrine which is most sharply opposed to the spirit of the times in which we live. The enunciation of this truth seems always to be designated as "rigorous" or as something worse by those who are animated by the spirit of the world, whether they are openly enemies of the Church or not.

Yet, if we examine the mentality of this sort of opposition, we find that it is directed ultimately, not against the teachings about the competence and the necessity of the Catholic Church, but actually against the redemptive work of Jesus Christ Our Lord. What is obviously back of objection to this portion of Catholic teaching is the conviction, or at least the claim, that eternal happiness is in some way the native right of all human beings without exception, or at least something within the field of competence of these same human beings.

A man who feels in this way is inevitably inclined to look upon the effects of Our Lord's redemptive sacrifice as in reality either non-existent or quite unimportant. If the best man can obtain is something to which he is entitled by the very fact of being a man, or something which he is competent to obtain through the exercise of his own natural powers, then of course it is hardly more than a mere verbalism to speak of

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a redemption. And if God is going to give everlasting life to any man, without regard for any contact with Our Lord, then the most Our Lord could have done has been to obtain some extra and accidental advantages in the supernatural order for those who come and stay in contact with Him.

Such, however, has not been the case, and any system of thought which bases itself on such false assumptions is completely and fatally unrealistic. As a matter of fact, all mankind, all the progeny of Adam, absolutely needed the forgiveness of sin and the liberation which actually came only through the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ Our Lord. If man's sins had remained unforgiven by God, then man would have been justly and necessarily shut away from the Beatific Vision forever. If man's personal mortal sins had not been forgiven, man would have been justly and necessarily subject to everlasting punishment for those sins.

In reality the only motive force for the forgiveness of man's sins is to be found in the redemption by Jesus Christ. And the only possible way for a man to have his own sins remitted is to come into contact with Our Lord and with His salvific power in the one and only social unit which has been divinely constituted as His Mystical Body. This means being within His Church as a member or at least by a sincere, even though perhaps only an implicit, desire or intention. The man who is not thus in contact with Our Lord cannot have the remission of sin. And he cannot have the effects that follow upon that remission of sin.

Once again, if we are to look upon this section of Catholic teaching accurately and objectively, we must take the trouble to realize that Our Lord did not die the terrible death of the Cross for the attainment of any paltry or merely accidental objective. He died to save men from sin and from the penalties of sin. He died to save men from servitude to Satan, the leader of all who are turned against God, and to save them from everlasting exclusion from the Beatific Vision. He died to save them from the everlasting penalties of hell. No one can have this gift of salvation apart from Him.

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Moreover, we must not lose sight of the fact that all men stand in need of redemption. There is absolutely no one who can come to the love and friendship of God by his own unaided natural powers. All men need the remission of sin, which is to be found only in the redemptive sacrifice of Our Lord. The infusion or granting of the supernatural life of grace is the positive aspect of the remission of original or mortal sin, and this life of grace is a sharing of the divine life, a sharing which is not to be obtained apart from the Incarnate Word of God. Since the sin of Adam there never has been and there never will be the remission of sin or the granting of the life of sanctifying grace to any human being apart from the force of Our Lord's redemptive sacrifice.

It is a further fact that, in the designs of God's providence, men come into salvific contact with Our Lord in His kingdom or His Mystical Body. Such, as a matter of fact, is the basic concept of God's kingdom even here on earth, for it is inherently the community of God's chosen people. The kingdom of God on earth is the social unit or the company of those who are "saved" in the sense that they are removed from the dominion of the prince of this world. It is the society within which Our Lord dwells and over which He presides as the true and invisible Head. And, in God's own dispensation, this society, in the period of the New Testament, is the Catholic Church.

Some of those who have written with what seems to be the avowed intention of weakening or obscuring this section of Catholic doctrine have admitted (as anyone who claims to be a Catholic must admit) that there is no salvation apart from Our Lord's redemption, but have likewise taught that we do not know the direction of those graces which God gives, through Our Lord, to those who are outside the Catholic Church. This assertion is definitely untrue.

All of the supernatural aids granted by God to any man tend to lead him to the eternal possession of the Beatific Vision. They likewise direct him toward those realities which, either by their very nature or by God's own institution, are

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requisite for the attainment of the Beatific Vision. One of those realities is the visible Catholic Church, the religious society over which the Bishop of Rome presides as the Vicar of Christ on earth. The graces which God grants to any man outside the Church will inevitably guide him in the direction of the Church.

If a man continues faithful to the graces given him by God he will certainly attain to eternal salvation. And he will just as certainly obtain that salvation "within" the true Church of Jesus Christ. God's grace will lead a man in the direction of justification, according to the pattern set forth in the teaching of the Council of Trent. It will direct him to believe God's revealed message with a certain assent based on the authority of God Himself revealing. It will lead him in the direction of salutary fear and of hope and of initial love of God and of penance. Ultimately it will lead him to a desire of baptism, even though, in some cases, that desire may be only implicit in character. And baptism is of itself the gateway to the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, within which the life of grace and salvation are to be found. In the case of a man who is already baptized, the preparation for justification includes an intention (at least implicit) of remaining within the kingdom of God to which baptism itself is the gateway.

It is both idle and misleading to characterize the teaching of the *Cantate Domino* as in any way "rigorous" or exigent. This doctrine, which is standard Catholic teaching, is only the expression of what God has taught about the place of His Son's Mystical Body in the economy of man's salvation. Neither the Catholic Church itself nor the teachers of the Church have made the Church something requisite for the attainment of the Beatific Vision. When the Church makes the sort of statement that is found in the *Cantate Domino*, it is acting merely as the teacher of what God Himself has revealed. As the Mystical Body of Christ, the society within which Our Lord Himself is the supreme Teacher, the Church could not do otherwise.

Disagreeable as the task may seem to some individuals, the

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Catholic Church has to face the facts. Basic among those facts is the truth that, apart from the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, all men would inevitably have been excluded for all eternity from the possession of the Beatific Vision, in which alone the ultimate and eternal end and happiness of man may be attained. Another fact is that the punishment for unforgiven mortal sin (sin of which the guilty party has not repented) is the everlasting penalty of hell, a penalty which includes both the *poena damni* and *poena sensus*. Still another fact is that the forgiveness of sin and the infusion of the life of grace is available by the power of Christ only "within" His kingdom, His Mystical Body, which, in this period of the New Testament, is the visible Catholic Church. Such, in the final analysis, is this teaching of the first section of our citation from the *Cantate Domino*.

The second sentence in the portion of the document translated at the beginning of this chapter brings out the fact that acts which would otherwise be most conducive to salvation are deprived of their effect if they are performed "outside" the bond of unity of the Catholic Church. It teaches that even the reception of the sacraments cannot be "profitable unto salvation," that is, cannot produce their effects in the life of divine grace for those who are outside of the unity of the ecclesiastical body. Furthermore it asserts that no work which of its very nature ought to be salutary can be profitable in the line of salvation unless these works are performed "within" the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Now, the sacraments produce grace of themselves, *ex opere operato*, as the technical language of sacred theology says. They bring about this effect except where there is some disposition on the part of the recipient which is incompatible with the reception of the life of sanctifying grace. According to the terminology of the *Cantate Domino*, such an obstacle exists in a person who is "outside" the unity of the ecclesiastical body, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.

Once again, at this point it is absolutely imperative to remember that being "within" the Church is not exactly

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the same thing as being a member of this social unit. A man is a member of the Church when he is baptized, and when he has neither publicly renounced his baptismal profession of the true faith nor withdrawn from the fellowship of the Church, and when he has not been expelled from the company of the disciples by having received the fullness of excommunication. But a man is " within " the Church to the extent that he can be saved " within " it when he is a member or even when he sincerely, albeit perhaps only implicitly, desires to enter it. The condition requisite for profiting from the reception of the sacraments or from the performance of acts which should be salutary is being " within " the Church.

Now, while it is possible to have a desire to be within the Church, and, indeed even to be a member of the Church, without having the love of charity for God, it is quite impossible to have charity without being within the true Church, at least by an implicit desire to dwell in it. The love of charity is, by its very nature, a sovereign affection. It is definable in terms of intention rather than of mere velleity; and it necessarily embodies an intention, rather than a mere velleity, to do what Our Lord actually wills we should do. And Our Lord wills that all men should enter and remain within the one society of His disciples, His Kingdom and His Mystical Body in this world.

An intention, incidentally, is an act of the will which is expressed by the statement that I am actually setting out to do a certain thing; a velleity, on the other hand, is an act of the will expressed in the declaration that I would like to do a thing. If I really intend to do a certain thing—to take a definite trip, for example—that intention necessarily affects all the rest of my plans and my conduct at the time. The man who really intends to take a plane to New York certainly will not make any plans or enter into any agreements incompatible with the taking of the trip he has set out to make. The mere velleity, on the other hand, has no such effectiveness. If I say I would like to take a trip to New York, this statement and the act of the will of which it is the expression have no

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influence whatsoever on the rest of my plans. The velleity is a mere complacency in an idea. It involves no actual preparation to accomplish its objective.

The love of charity is essentially something in the line of intention rather than of mere velleity. The man who loves God with the true affection of charity actually intends, insofar as it is possible for him to do so, to do the will of God. It is definitely the will of God that all men should enter and live within the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. It is impossible for a man who really loves God with the affection of divine charity not to be within the Church as a member or at least to desire with a sincere and effective, even though perhaps only an implicit, intention to enter this company.

Hence, if a man is not "within" the Church at least by a sincere desire or affection, he has not the genuine love of charity for God. In such a case there is some intention which runs counter to God's will acting as the guiding and the motivating force of his life. If that intention persists, it remains incompatible with the love of charity and with the life of sanctifying grace, which is inseparable from the love of charity. The man with such an intention is not in a position to profit from the sacraments or from a work which, of its very nature, ought to be salutary. The life of sanctifying grace is impossible for a man who possesses an intention incompatible with the intention of charity itself. The man who is outside the Church, in the sense that he does not even have an implicit desire to enter the kingdom of God on earth, obviously acts as moved by such an intention.

Thus the *Cantate Domino* brings out very clearly the following facts which were previously set forth in a more implicit manner in previous declarations of the Church.

(1) All of those outside the Church, even the individuals who have committed no sin against the faith itself, are in a position in which they cannot be saved unless they in some way enter or join the Church before they die.

(2) The alternative to eternal and supernatural salvation is deprivation of the Beatific Vision. In the case of those who

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are guilty of mortal sin which remains unrepented, this includes both the penalty of loss and the penalty of sense in hell.

(3) The spiritual condition of one who is not "within" the Church at least by an act of implicit desire is incompatible with the reception of the life of sanctifying grace.

Furthermore, a study of the *Cantate Domino* should make it apparent that the dogma of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation is not directed "against" any individuals or any societies. This dogma is only a statement by the Church of the truth which God has revealed and which He has confided to the Church. According to God's own message, men in this world stand in need of genuine salvation, and, in His goodness and mercy, God has made His supernatural kingdom on earth the company in which alone this salvation is to be achieved.

It is well to remember that the teaching of the *Cantate Domino* is not that men must actually become members of the Church in order to attain to eternal salvation. The document insists that pagans, Jews, heretics, and schismatics will not be saved unless, before the end of their lives they are joined (*aggregati*) to the one true Church. It is Catholic doctrine now, and it was Catholic doctrine when the *Cantate Domino* was written, that a man who is in the Church in the sense that he sincerely, even though only implicitly, desires to live within it, is in a position to be saved if he should die before he is able to attain membership in the Church.

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IV

THE ALLOCUTION *SINGULARI QUADAM*

Two declarations of Pope Pius IX on the subject of the Catholic Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation are of primary importance in the study of this section of sacred theology. The first is found in his allocution *Singulari quadam*, delivered on December 9, 1854, the day after the solemn definition of the dogma of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, to the Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops who had gathered in Rome to be witnesses of that definition. The second is contained in his encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, addressed to the Bishops of Italy on August 10, 1863.

Both of these statements are tremendously profound and rich in theological implication. Moreover they are much more difficult to explain than any other pronouncements of the teaching Church on this subject. As a matter of fact, they have all too frequently been misinterpreted by Catholic writers who have examined them superficially or who have, in some instances, even accepted translations which were something less than fully adequate. In both of these documents it is imperative to consider the context in which Pope Pius IX placed his statement and explanation of the dogma.

The pertinent section of the *Singulari quadam* includes the following paragraphs:

> Not without sorrow have we seen that another error, and one not less ruinous [than the error of crass rationalism dealt with in the previous section of the allocution], has taken possession of certain portions of the Catholic world, and has entered into the souls of many Catholics who think that they can well hope for the eternal salvation of all those who have in no way entered into the true Church of Christ. For that reason they are accustomed to inquire time and time again as to what is going to be the fate and the condition after death of those who have never yielded themselves to the Catholic faith and, convinced by completely inadequate argu-

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ments (*vanissimisque adductis rationibus*), they await a response that will favor this evil teaching. Far be it from Us, Venerable Brethren, to presume to establish limits to the divine mercy, which is infinite. Far be it from Us to wish to scrutinize the hidden counsels and judgments of God, which are "a great deep," and which human thought can never pentrate. In accordance with Our apostolic duty, We wish to stir up your episcopal solicitude and vigilance to drive out of men's minds, to the extent to which you are able to use all your energies, that opinion, equally impious and deadly, that the way of eternal salvation can be found in any religion (*quavis in religione reperiri posse aeternae salutis viam*). With all the skill and learning at your command, you should prove to the people entrusted to your care that this dogma of the Catholic faith is in no way opposed to the divine mercy and justice.

Certainly we must hold it as of faith that no one can be saved outside the apostolic Roman Church, that this is the only Ark of salvation, and that the one who does not enter it is going to perish in the deluge. But, nevertheless, we must likewise hold it as certain that those who labor in ignorance of the true religion, if that [ignorance] be invincible, will never be charged with any guilt on this account before the eyes of the Lord. Now, who is there who would arrogate to himself the power to indicate the extent of such [invincible] ignorance according to the nature and the variety of peoples, regions, talents, and so many other things? For really when, loosed from these bodily bonds, we see God as He is, we shall certainly understand with what intimate and beautiful a connection the divine mercy and justice are joined together. But, while we live on earth, weighed down by this mortal body that darkens the mind, let us hold most firmly, from Catholic doctrine, that there is one God, one faith, one baptism. It is wrong to push our inquiries further than this.

For the rest, as the cause of charity demands, let us pour forth continual prayers to God that all nations everywhere may be converted to Christ. And let us do all in our power to bring about the common salvation of men, for the hand of the Lord is not shortened and the gifts of heavenly grace will never be lacking to those who sincerely wish and pray to be comforted in this light. Truths of this kind must be deeply implanted in the minds of the faithful so that they may not be corrupted by the false doctrines that tend to encourage the religious indifference (*doctrinis eo spectantibus, ut religionis foveant indifferentiam*) which we see being spread abroad and strengthened to the ruination of souls.[1]

[1] *Denz.*, 1646-48

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The teaching of the *Singulari quadam* is of special importance since this allocution was the first "modern" statement by the Roman Pontiff on the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church. The intellectual background against which Pope Pius IX taught over one hundred years ago is much the same, fundamentally, as that which exists in our own time. Hence it is imperative, for a proper understanding of this portion of Catholic teaching, to analyze this statement so as to see exactly what is brought out in this allocution.

The basic thesis of the *Singulari quadam* is the assertion that the teaching "no one can be saved outside the apostolic Roman Church" is a dogma of the faith. It is something to which the assent of faith itself must be given. As such, it is of course completely infallible. It is something which can never be corrected or modified. It must be received as an absolutely true proposition.

It is interesting, incidentally, to note that Pope Pius IX was faced with a situation quite similar to that which Pope Pius XII described when he wrote his encyclical *Humani generis,* in August, 1950. The attack on the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation a hundred years ago was not conducted by men who presumed to deny or to suppress the statement that there is no salvation outside the Church. Their tactic was much more subtle and dangerous: they tried to empty this statement of all real meaning. They tried to make Catholics believe that there was some hope of salvation for people who had never entered the Church in any way. The *Singulari quadam* characterizes this contention as a ruinous error.

Pope Pius XII dealt with a similar situation when he condemned the efforts of those teachers who were trying to reduce the teaching that the Church is necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation "to an empty formula." [2] Pius IX worked in this direction when he condemned the teaching that there is some hope for the salvation of men who have in no way entered the true Church of Jesus Christ.

[2] In the encyclical *Humani generis.*

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Those who taught inaccurately about the necessity of the Church for salvation a century ago used still another tactic. They tried to make it appear that there was something unjust about this basic Catholic teaching. They claimed, directly or by implication, that there was some contradiction between this dogma and the assertions of the faith which teach us that God is all-just and all-merciful. The allocution *Singulari quadam* deals with this maneuver also. Pope Pius IX made it perfectly clear that it is the duty of the hierarchy to prove to the people entrusted to their care that there is no opposition whatsoever between the teaching on the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation and the dogmas of the divine justice and mercy. He presented this teaching, then, as an integral part of true Catholic doctrine.

As a part of their tactic the opponents of the true Catholic teaching tried to make it appear that a genuine acceptance of the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Church implied the teaching that God would punish men for being invincibly ignorant of the true Church. Pope Pius IX set out to meet this contention also in the *Singulari quadam.* He stated simply that it is certain Catholic truth that God will blame no man for invincible ignorance of the Catholic Church, any more than He will blame anyone for invincible ignorance of anything else.

Incidentally, on this point, there have been Catholic writers who have been led astray by an incomplete translation of this portion of the *Singulari quadam.* The allocution says that people who are invincibly ignorant of the true religion "will never be charged with any guilt *on this account* before the eyes of the Lord." The Latin text reads ". . . *qui verae religionis ignorantiam laborent, si ea sit invincibilis, nulla ipsos obstringi* huiusce rei *culpa ante oculos Domini.*" Some persons have attempted a translation of this passage which takes no account of the words "*huiusce rei.*" Such translations tend to present invincible ignorance of the true religion as a sort of sacrament, since they make it appear that the Sovereign Pontiff taught that persons invincibly ignorant of

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the true religion are simply not blameworthy in the eyes of the Lord.

The fact of the matter is (and this is the gist of the teaching of Pope Pius IX here and in the encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore*) that non-appurtenance to the Catholic Church is by no means the only reason why men are deprived of the Beatific Vision. Ultimately, the only factor that will exclude a man from the eternal and supernatural enjoyment of God in heaven is sin, either original or mortal. An infant who dies without having been baptized will not have the Beatific Vision because original sin has rendered him incapable of it. Any man who dies after having attained the use of reason and who is eternally excluded from the Beatific Vision is being punished for actual mortal sin which he has committed. Such a man may be further prevented from enjoying the Beatific Vision because of the original sin which has not been deleted by baptism.

If we are to understand this teaching, we must not allow ourselves to fail to realize that there is absolutely no middle ground between the state of supernatural sanctifying grace and the state of sin or aversion from God. Any man who loves God with a love of friendship or benevolence, sincerely desiring and intending to do His will and preferring to suffer anything rather than to offend Him has divine supernatural charity and is in the state of grace. If he dies in that state, he will inevitably attain to the Beatific Vision. And, incidentally, if he has the love of charity for God, he is "within" the true Church of Jesus Christ, at least by sincere (although perhaps merely implicit) intention and desire.

If, on the other hand, a man has not a love of charity for God, he is in the state of sin. If an adult for whom Our Lord died on the Cross has not this love of charity for God, it can only be because he has chosen some object of affection incompatible with the love of charity. If he passes from this life in that condition, voluntarily averted from God, he will not gain the glory of heaven. This is true whether the man dies as a member or as a non-member of the true Catholic Church.

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Thus it is perfectly possible for a man to die "outside" the true Church and to be excluded from the Beatific Vision forever without having his ignorance of the true Church or of the true religion counted as a moral fault. That is precisely what Pope Pius IX said in the *Singulari quadam*. He said it, as the context shows, as part of his explanation of the fact that the Catholic dogma of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation in no way involves a contradiction of the doctrines about God's sovereign mercy and justice.

In this section of the *Singulari quadam* Pope Pius IX goes on to urge the Bishops of the Catholic Church to use all of their energies to drive from the minds of men the deadly error that the way of salvation can be found in any religion. To a certain extent this is a mere restatement of the erroneous opinion according to which we may well hope for the salvation of men who have never entered in any way into the Catholic Church, the first misinterpretation of Catholic teaching reproved in this section of the allocution. Yet, in another way, the error that the way of salvation can be found in any religion has its own peculiar and individual malignity. It is based on the false implication that the false religions, those other than the Catholic, are in some measure a partial approach to the fullness of truth which is to be found in Catholicism. According to this doctrinal aberration, the Catholic religion would be distinct from others, not as the true is distinguished from the false, but only as the plenitude is distinct from incomplete participations of itself. It is this notion, the idea that all other religions contain enough of the essence of that completeness, of truth which is to be found in Catholicism, to make them vehicles of eternal salvation, which is thus reproved in the *Singulari quadam*.

One of the most interesting factors in this section of the allocution is the fact that Pope Pius IX forbids his people to inquire into the presence or the lack or the extent of invincible ignorance in individual cases. He actually goes so far as to insist that it is wrong to go beyond the teaching

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that there is one God, one faith, and one baptism. In issuing this order and in making the assertion, Pope Pius IX was actually taking cognizance of one of the basic conditions of the Christian doctrinal ministry.

The primary and central object of the Church's doctrinal ministry is to be found in the body of truth revealed by God through Our Lord Jesus Christ, and delivered to the Church by His Apostles as doctrine to be accepted with the assent of divine faith. The secondary object of that ministry embraces all and only those truths which the Church must be able to teach inerrantly in order to teach its primary object adequately as a living and infallible teaching body. The decision as to just what would constitute invincible, as distinct from vincible or culpable, ignorance of the Catholic Church in any individual case does not fall within the confines of either object. And, as a matter of fact, this decision is something which man in this life is quite incapable of forming rightly.

It is definitely the business of the teacher of Catholic truth to bring out the fact that God is all-merciful and all-just in Himself and in His dealings with all His creatures. Every man who comes into this world is the recipient of God's justice and of His mercy. In the light of the Beatific Vision we shall see how God's mercy and His justice have been exercised in the case of each individual who is saved, and of each individual who is lost, or deprived of the supernatural enjoyment of God, forever. It is wrong to seek to find out how this is so in this life, since the evidence we would need for such an inquiry is definitely not available to us, and, in striving to bring statements about an unknowable subject into the fabric of Catholic teaching, we would only succeed in confusing and adulterating the body of truth which God has deigned to give to His Church.

In the *Singulari quadam* Pope Pius IX reminded the members of the apostolic hierarchy that, on this subject, it should be their concern to limit their teaching and to limit the inquiries of the Christians subject to their care to the body of revealed truths themselves. They are to see to it that their

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people know that, according to the teaching of God Himself, there is but one Lord in whom and by whom and through whom salvation is achieved. They are to instruct their people so that the flock may be aware of the fact that there is only one faith, only one body of revealed truth which constitutes God's public and supernatural message for the salvation of men. And they are to preach and teach in such a way that their people will realize that there is only one baptism, only one sacrament of regeneration which is the entrance into the one true Church, the supernatural kingdom of God, the Mystical Body of Christ, in which alone there is salvific contact with the Triune God. This is part of the divine message which they are commissioned and commanded to teach. The invincibility of the ignorance of some individual who is not a member of the Church is definitely not contained in the divine message which has been confided to the apostolic *collegium*.

The *Singulari quadam* contains still another immediately important contribution to Catholic teaching about the possibility of salvation within the Church on the part of individuals who die before they can actually attain membership in this society. It is contained in these two sentences:

> For the rest, as the cause of charity demands, let us pour forth continual prayers to God that all nations everywhere may be converted to Christ. And let us do all in our power to bring about the common salvation of men, for the hand of the Lord is not shortened and the gifts of heavenly grace will never be lacking to those who sincerely wish and pray to be comforted in this light.

These two sentences contain what might be called the chart or the plan of the apostolic work for the salvation of men. Pope Pius IX called upon his brother Bishops of the Catholic Church to unite in praying "that all nations everywhere may be converted to Christ" and in employing their energies and talents to the utmost "to bring about the common salvation of men." Thus the Sovereign Pontiff reminded his hearers and the entire Church of God that, in the plan of Our Lord's own teaching, salvation is described as coming to men through

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the efforts of His followers, and particularly through the labors of His apostolic college. Such, of course, is the significance of Our Lord's final instruction to His apostles before His ascension into heaven, as recorded in the Gospel according to St. Mark.

> And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature.
> He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned.[3]

Behind the errors which Pope Pius IX was fighting in his allocution was the vague notion that salvation was in some way independent of the efforts of the Catholic Church and of its hierarchy. The religious indifference which was spreading throughout the world a century ago and which was directly or indirectly affecting some of the Catholic people themselves tried to make it appear that in some way or another salvation was due to men by the very fact that they were human beings, descendants of Adam and Eve. To counter the vicious influence of this indifference, Pope Pius IX recalled to the minds of the Bishops of the Church the fact that salvation was something meant to come to men through the power of these Bishops' own work and prayers. In that way it was completely in line with the teaching of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans:

> For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.
> How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?
> And how shall they preach unless they be sent, as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things? [4]

The people who are sent to preach the gospel of salvation are precisely the members of the teaching Church, the Bishops of the Catholic Church, the apostolic college instituted and commissioned by Our Lord Himself. These men, together

[3] *Mark*, 16: 15 f.

[4] *Rom.*, 10: 13-15.

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with the people they call upon to help them in their work, are the ones through whom the message of salvation and the possiblity of salvation must come, according to the divine teaching itself, to the children of men.

The exhortation in the *Singulari quadam* recalls the response of St. Paul to his responsibility in the way of bringing salvation to those for whom Our Lord died. The Apostle of the Gentiles was willing to do and to suffer so much because he realized that he was acting as God's instrument in bringing salvation to men. He saw himself as in some way the cause of the salvation of men who benefitted from his apostolic labors. He took cognizance of the fact that he was working to gain for Christ and to save those for whom he worked. He brings this out in a magnificent passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

> For whereas I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more.
>
> And I became to the Jews a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law, as if I were under the law (whereas myself was not under the law), that I might gain them that were under the law. To them that were without the law, as if I were without the law (whereas I was not without the law of God, but as in the law of Christ), that I might gain them that were without the law.
>
> To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all.
>
> And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be made partaker thereof.[5]

Perhaps the most eloquent statement of the fact that salvation comes from Our Lord's message is to be found in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It is in preaching this message, and in praying that men may accept it with the assent of divine faith and live in conformity to its teachings, that the Bishops of the Catholic Church are, according to the teaching of the *Singulari quadam,* to work for the common salvation of men. St. Paul wrote:

[5] *I Cor.*, 9: 19-23.

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To the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise, I am a debtor.

So (as much as is in me) I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are at Rome.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first and to the Greek.

For the justice of God is revealed therein, from faith unto faith, as it is written: The just man liveth by faith.[6]

The act of divine faith is entirely requisite in order that a man may be converted to Our Lord, in whom alone salvation is to be found. It was of "Our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth" that St. Peter said: "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."[7]

Pope Pius IX put forward this prayer and work incumbent upon the Bishops of the Catholic Church as something which was to be done out of charity. It is, indeed, essentially the work of this virtue. Charity is the supernatural love of friendship for God, a love which necessarily carries with it the love of our neighbor based upon this affection for God. The love of friendship for God necessarily involves a sincere will to do His will. Now, it is the will of God that all men be saved. In the First Epistle to Timothy we read of God our Saviour that He "will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."[8]

Objectively, then, a person is doing the work of charity when he works and prays to bring his fellow men to accept divine public revelation, to enter and to remain in the true supernatural kingdom of God on earth, and to prepare for the possession and enjoyment of the Beatific Vision. The obligation to do this work is all the more incumbent upon the men whom Our Lord has made responsible for the spiritual well-being of their fellows, the members of the apostolic college. The Bishops of the Catholic Church, under the leadership of the Bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter, constitute this apostolic college. Justice as well as charity demands

[6] *Rom.*, 1: 14-17. [7] *Acts*, 4: 12. [8] *I Tim.*, 2: 4.

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that these men work and pray for the accomplishment of this end as powerfully as they can. This is the obligation of which Pope Pius IX spoke in the *Singulari quadam.*

Essential to this task is an effort to bring men to enter and to remain within the true Church. The Holy Father had already recalled the fact that it is a dogma of divine faith that no one will attain salvation outside the Catholic Church. It would be worse than idle to imagine that one could work for the salvation of men without trying to influence them to enter and to stay within the Mytical Body of Jesus Christ.

Thus, in the final paragraph of the section of the *Singulari quadam* that deals with the necessity of the Catholic Church, the Holy Father recalls the intimate connection between this dogma and the missionary nature of the Church itself. The Catholic Church, by reason of that charity which forms the crowning part of what the old theologians designated as the inward or spiritual bond of unity within it, has no choice but to work with all the force at its command to influence men to come and to dwell within it, so that within it they may attain the eternal joys of the Beatific Vision. The Holy Church works necessarily and always for the glory of God, to be achieved in the salvation of those souls for whom Our Lord died on the Cross. By God's institution, and definitely not by reason of any move on the part of the Church as such, eternal salvation is available only to those who die in some manner "within" the Catholic Church. Hence, in working to achieve its ultimate objective, the Church necessarily and always seeks the means requisite for the attainment of that objective.

Within this same paragraph is one of the most profound observations on the subject of the Church's necessity for salvation to be found in any pontifical document. After insisting on the duty of the Bishops of the Catholic Church to do all in their power to bring about the common salvation of men, the Sovereign Pontiff reminded his hearers that "the hand of the Lord is not shortened, and the gifts of heavenly grace will never be wanting to those who sincerely wish and pray to be comforted in this light." Thus he taught that the work of

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salvation and the work of conversion to the Catholic Church are definitely labors of divine grace. The apostolic worker for Our Lord need not fancy that the effects of this work will depend ultimately merely, or even principally, upon his own powers and initiative.

Those who are summoned into that Church within which alone salvation is to be found are called, first of all, by divine grace itself. If they correspond with that grace, and sincerely will (even though only implicitly) entrance into the Church, and if they express that will or intention in the infallibly effective act of Christian prayer, God will grant them both entrance into the Church and the salvation which they desire.

It must be understood that the influence of the actual grace which God in His mercy bestows upon men is always in the direction of the attainment of the Beatific Vision. The man who has not the virtue of divine faith and who is in the state of sin is led by the force of grace to make an act of faith, to fear God, to hope for Him as his own good to be enjoyed forever, to begin to love Him, and thus to turn against sin by that penance which comes before baptism, to resolve to amend his life, and to be baptized, and thus to enter the true Church. Once a man is within the Church and in the state of sanctifying grace, the force of divine grace urges him on to an ever-increasing perfection, which involves an ever-increasing intensity of charity. If a man continues to correspond with these graces, he will ultimately attain to his eternal salvation.

Should he sin after the reception of baptism, the direction of the force of grace is toward the reception of absolution in the sacrament of penance, and, of course to the contrition, confession, and satisfaction which belong to the sacrament. In every case the impulse of actual grace leads a man to salvation and to the means requisite for the attainment of salvation which the man upon whom the grace is working has not as yet employed or possessed. For a man who is entirely and essentially "outside" the Church, the force of divine grace will influence him toward entrance into this society.

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Correspondence to divine grace, which has brought a man to believe in God and to hope in Him, will lead him to pray to God for the gift of salvation and for the means necessary to salvation which the man does not yet enjoy. Now, prayer which is offered for one's own salvation and for the gifts which are requisite for the attainment of that salvation is infallibly efficacious when it is sincere, pious, and persevering. Thus, even when a man dies before he is actually able to become a member of the Church through the reception of baptism or through canonical reconciliation with the Church, his sincere, persevering, and pious prayer for salvation and for entrance into this society will be answered by God. Contrary to the insinuations and the statements of the indifferentists against which the *Singulari quadam* was directed, God is not being outdone in generosity by any of His creatures. Those who correspond with the graces He offers them will receive the answer to their prayers.

This, then, is the teaching which Pope Pius IX insisted that the Bishops of the Catholic Church should give to their people, in order to keep out of the minds of those people the false doctrines which could ruin their spiritual lives.

The *Singulari quadam* brings out the following teachings much more clearly and explicitly than previous ecclesiastical declarations on the necessity of the Church for salavation had done.

(1) It is a ruinous error to imagine that one can have grounds of hope that people now dead, and who had not entered into the Church in any way during the course of their lives, are saved.

(2) The dogma that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church is in no way opposed to the truth that God is all-merciful and all-just.

(3) The doctrine that no one is saved outside the Catholic Church is a truth revealed by God through Jesus Christ, and a truth which all men must believe with the assent of divine faith. It is a Catholic dogma.

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(4) Invincible ignorance, of the true Church or of anything else, is not considered by God as a sin. The dogma that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church in no way implies that invincible ignorance is sinful.

(5) It is an impious and deadly error to hold that salvation may be attained in any religion.

(6) It is not within the field either of our competence or of our rights to search out the way in which God's mercy and His justice operate in any given case of a person ignorant of the true Church or of the true religion. We shall see how these divine attributes have operated in the light of the Beatific Vision itself.

(7) It is the business of the Church to work and to pray that all men will attain salvation in the Church.

(8) God is never outdone in generosity. The person who tries to come to Him will never be forsaken. As a matter of fact, the movement toward God, like all good things, originates from God Himself.

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V

THE ENCYCLICAL *QUANTO CONFICIAMUR MOERORE*

The teaching of this encyclical is parallel with that of the allocution *Singulari quadam*. In both of these documents Pope Pius IX insisted upon the fact that it is a dogma of the faith that no man can be saved outside the Catholic Church. Indeed, the language of the encyclical on this point is even more forceful and explicit than that of the allocution. Likewise in both of these documents there is a very clear implication of the truth that a man can be " within " the true Church in such a way as to be saved without being a member of this society and, indeed, without having a explicit knowledge of it at all. Moreover both the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* and the *Singulari quadam* insist upon the missionary nature of the Church and bring this truth into play in their explanations of the dogma. The encyclical, however, brings out some aspects of the teaching not touched upon directly in the allocution which was delivered almost nine years previously. The following two paragraphs of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* have to do with the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation.

And here, Our Beloved Sons and Venerable Brethren, We must mention and reprove a most serious error into which some Catholics have fallen, imagining that men living in errors and apart (*alienos*) from the true faith and from the Catholic unity can attain to eternal life. This, of course, is completely opposed to Catholic doctrine. It is known to Us and to you that those who labor in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion, and who, carefully observing the natural law and its precepts which God has inscribed in the hearts of all, and who, being ready to obey God, live an honest and upright life, can, through the working of the divine light and grace, attain eternal life, since God, who clearly sees, inspects, and knows the minds, the intentions, the thoughts, and the habits of all, will, by reason of His goodness and kindness, never allow anyone who

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has not the guilt of wilful sin to be punished by eternal sufferings. But it is a perfectly well known Catholic dogma that no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church, and that those who are contumacious against the authority of that same Church, and who are pertinaciously separated from the unity of that Church and from Peter's successor, the Roman Pontiff, to whom the custody of the vineyard has been entrusted by the Saviour, cannot obtain eternal salvation.

God forbid, however, that the children of the Catholic Church should in any way ever be the enemies of those who are in no way joined to us in the same bonds of faith and of charity. But let them [the Catholics] rather strive always to take care of these people when they [those outside the Church] are poor or sick or afflicted by any other ills. Primarily, let them strive to take these people out of the darkness of error in which they unfortunately live, and bring them back to the Catholic truth and to the loving Mother Church that never ceases to hold out its maternal hands affectionately to them, and to call them back to its embrace so that, established and strengthened in faith, hope, and charity, and bringing forth fruit in every good work, they may attain eternal salvation.[1]

There are three most important lessons contained in this section of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, the Holy Father's insistence upon the real necessity of the Church for salvation, his implied indication of a distinction between the necessity of means and the necessity of precept, and his teaching about the possibility of salvation for a man who is invincibly ignorant of the true religion but who faithfully observes the natural law. All of these lessons must be studied carefully by a man who seeks to know the genuine doctrine of the Catholic Church on the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation. The teaching of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* has a special importance because this encyclical has been misinterpreted more than once by men who offered inadequate or inaccurate explanations of the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Church.

First of all it must be noted that the statement of the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Church is more forceful and explicit in this encyclical than in any other document,

[1] *Denz.*, 1677 f.

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except perhaps the *Cantate Domino* itself. Pope Pius IX condemned as a most serious error (*gravissimum errorem*) the notion that "men living in errors and apart from the true faith and from the Catholic unity can attain to eternal life." He denounced this false teaching as something most completely opposed to Catholic doctrine.

Furthermore he brought out with special clarity the practical import of this teaching. He reminded the Bishops of Italy, and through them the entire Christian world, that the members of the Catholic Church have definite obligations of charity toward non-Catholics. Not only are Catholics forbidden to be enemies of those outside the fold, but they are also bound to exercise the corporal and spiritual works of mercy for the benefit of non-Catholics. Pope Pius IX stressed the importance of the corporal works of mercy. He asserted that Catholics are obligated to be zealous in taking care of non-members of the Church "when they are poor or sick or afflicted with any other ills." But he also insisted upon the fact that their most important duty in the line of charity was an effort to free these people from their errors and to lead them back to the true Church so that therein "they may attain eternal salvation."

In other words, according to the *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, the Catholics are obliged in conscience to be realistic in their prayers and works of charity for the benefit of their non-Catholic associates. Pope Pius IX did not want his people to forget that charity for one's neighbor is essentially a part of charity toward God. It is not a work of merely secularistic humanitarianism. The love for one's neighbor which is truly a part of divine charity is essentially a desire to give this neighbor, insofar as it lies within our power, what he needs or will find helpful for the attainment of the Beatific Vision. The basic desire of charity for one's neighbor is the will of intention that this neighbor should have the life of sanctifying grace, and, if he already possesses this supernatural life, that he should grow and persevere in it. It is thus in line with the motive of the Incarnation, the motive that guided Our

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Lord Himself. He expressed that motive when He declared: "I am come that they may have life and have it more abundantly." [2]

Hence, when true Catholic charity takes care of a man who is sick or afflicted in any other way, it does not look upon this man as one whose destiny is limited to this world and to this life. On the contrary, it takes explicit cognizance that the person it works to benefit is one for whom Our Lord died on the Cross, one whom God wills to have with Him forever in the glory of the Beatific Vision. In the encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, Pope Pius IX reminded the Catholics of the entire world that this explicit cognizance should be eminently practical. The work of Catholic charity is definitely not complete unless every effort has been expended to free men from the errors that keep them from the eternal possession of God which is their only ultimate end. And, since, by God's own institution, the true Church of Jesus Christ is really requisite for the attainment of man's eternal and supernatural salvation, the work of Catholic charity is lamentably incomplete unless every reasonable effort has been made to persuade non-Catholics to enter this society.

The *Quanto conficiamur moerore* is supremely realistic in that it recognizes religious error as an evil, and as a definite and serious misfortune for the people who are affected by it. Its objectivity and plain speaking must have been as startling to the moderns of nearly a century ago as it is to some of the men of our own day. Some of the men of the nineteenth century and of the twentieth have been prone to lose sight of the fact that actually a man's life is vitiated by a mistake about his eternal destiny or about the means God has established for the attainment of that destiny. Thus there could be nothing more catastrophic in human life than the acceptance of the errors of atheism or agnosticism, or errors about Our Divine Redeemer, His Church, His religion, and His sacraments. It is strange that some individuals who would be first to acknowledge the calamitous nature of an error in

[2] *John*, 10: 10.

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aviation engineering, which would result in the loss of a plane, are not willing to acknowledge the inherent evil of error about Christ and His Church, which would result in man's eternal failure.

Pope Pius IX incorporated into this section of the encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore* a fundamental teaching about the missionary nature or activity of the Catholic Church. Besides bringing out the fact that the Church expects its own children to perform their obligation of charity to those outside the fold by striving to bring these people into the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the encyclical explains that the Church invites non-Catholics to enter it "so that, established and strengthened in faith, hope, and charity, and bringing forth fruit in every good work, they may attain eternal salvation." The ultimate and fundamental reason why the Catholic Church has always sought and must always seek converts is that these converts may attain the Beatific Vision. The Church is essentially and necessarily a missionary society only because God Himself has established this society as a means necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation.

Furthermore, the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* is realistic enough to take cognizance of the fact that faith itself comes from and through the Church. We must not lose sight of the fact that the formula for the administration of baptism, in the *Rituale Romanum*, contains this dialog:

"What do you ask of the Church of God?"
"Faith."
"What does faith offer you?"
"Everlasting life."

Divine faith is definitely something which men are expected to seek and to find in the true Church of Jesus Christ. Essentially the true Church is and has been since the time of our first parents the congregation of the faithful, the *congregatio fidelium*. A man reasonably and prudently asks the Church for faith since the Church is the society authorized and empowered by Our Lord Himself to teach His message, the doctrine we accept with the assent of Christian faith. And

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the Church is far more than merely the society authorized by Our Lord to teach in His name. It is actually His Mystical Body, the congregation within which He acts as the Sovereign Teacher, in such a way that the members of the hierarchy, the *ecclesia docens,* are His instruments or ambassadors in the presentation of His Father's message.

Thus the teaching of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* is quite accurate in describing the Church as the social unit within which people are established and strengthened in the faith itself. The Epistle to the Hebrews describes Our Lord as "the author and finisher of faith."[3] The Catholic Church is His Mystical Body. In seeking faith from the Church, we seek it from Him.

Faith, hope and charity, together with all the other qualities that enable us to live the supernatural life, come to us from Our Lord. He is actually the Head of His Mystical Body, and invites those who do not as yet belong to it to join it so that they may be established and strengthened in these virtues by Our Lord, the Head of the Church. There is no other source from which these benefits can come.

Furthermore, faith, hope, charity, and the rest actually constitute what the older theologians used to call the spiritual or inner bond of unity within the Catholic Church. If a man actually believes in God by holding as certain, on the authority of God revealing, the content of that message Our Lord preached and continues to preach in the midst of the society of His disciples, and if, in the light of that faith, and moved by God's grace, a man hopes for God as his own eternal Good and loves Him with the supernatural friendship of charity, he is by that very fact joined to Our Lord and to His disciples within the supernatural kingdom of God.

There have, unfortunately, been some rather serious misinterpretations of the second and third lessons contained in that portion of the encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore* that deals with the necessity of the Catholic Church for the attainment of eternal salvation. The second lesson is to be found

[3] *Heb.,* 12: 12.

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in the teaching of Pope Pius IX on the distinction between the Church's necessity of means and its necessity of precept. This lesson is brought out in a rather long and complicated sentence in the text. The encyclical tells us that "it is a perfectly well known Catholic dogma that no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church, and that those who are contumacious against the authority of that same Church, and who are contumaciously separated from the unity of that Church and from Peter's successor, the Roman Pontiff, to whom the custody of the vineyard has been entrusted by the Saviour, cannot obtain eternal salvation."

Some careless writers and teachers have tried to make people imagine that the second portion of this sentence is an expression of the entire meaning conveyed in the first section of that same sentence. Writers of this sort incidentally, have even misinterpreted the Holy Office letter of 1949, the *Suprema haec sacra*, where the terminology is even clearer than that employed in the *Quanto conficiamur moerore*. In both instances there has been an attempt to give the impression that these authoritative documents were representing the Catholic Church as necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation by the necessity of precept only. In both instances the attempts were manifestly wrong. Here, however, we shall consider only the text of the encyclical written by Pope Pius IX. We shall study the *Suprema haec sacra* in a later chapter.

The immediate text in the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* indicates quite clearly that the Sovereign Pontiff was dealing with two distinct kinds of necessity. The context proves this point beyond any possibility of doubt. The sentence quoted two paragraphs above tells us of the well known dogma that no one can be saved outside the Church *and* states that people contumaciously separated from the Church and its visible head cannot be saved. The text itself thus indicates quite obviously that the Church is, according to its own doctrine, necessary in two distinct ways. First of all, it is represented as something necessary for all men. No one will attain to eternal salvation unless he is in some way "within" this society at the moment

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of his death. Again, it is shown as necessary in still another manner. People who obstinately stay separated from it and from its visible head, the Roman Pontiff, cannot obtain eternal salvation.

Now it is immediately evident that the first statement would not be true at all if the Catholic Church were necessary for salvation merely with the necessity of precept. A thing is said to be necessary for salvation with the necessity of precept when God has issued a command which cannot be disobeyed except at the cost of the loss of friendship with Him. A thing which is merely the object of God's command and no more would be something necessary with the necessity of precept alone. The only persons who could be excluded from salvation on this count would be the men and women who knowingly and deliberately disobeyed the command given by God. Persons invincibly ignorant of that command would not be and could not be deprived of eternal salvation because they had not obeyed the command.

Thus, if the Church were necessary for salvation merely with the necessity of precept, or, to put the same thing in another way, if the Church were necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation only in the sense that individuals contumaciously separated from it could not be saved, it would definitely not be true to say that no man could be saved outside the Catholic Church. Yet this is precisely what the encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, together with many other authoritative documents of the *ecclesia docens*, does assert. The language of the encyclical is most explicit: "*neminem scilicet extra catholicam Ecclesiam posse salvari.*"

The only possible way a man could logically hold that the statement "no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church" means nothing more than "people who are contumaciously separated from the Church cannot be saved," is to postulate that the only people outside of the Church are those obstinately and wilfully separated from it. Such a teaching would, of course, constitute a denial of any invincible ignorance of the Church on the part of non-Catholics. An interpretation

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of this sort would run counter to the very context of the document it set out to explain. Yet this fanciful teaching is necessarily and clearly implied in any attempt to persuade people that the Catholic dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation means only that persons who wilfully remain separated from the Church and from the Roman Pontiff cannot obtain eternal salvation.

The context of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* makes it even more evident that we cannot explain the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation as meaning merely that the Church is necessary with the necessity of precept. The primary point brought out in this section of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* is the vigorous repudiation by Pope Pius IX of the erroneous teaching "that men living in errors and apart from the true faith and from the Catholic unity can attain to eternal life." Here the Sovereign Pontiff referred to all the people of this class. He did not restrict his statement to those who are wilfully or contumaciously dwelling and remaining apart from the Church and its teaching. It is only by doing manifest violence to the text of his encyclical that his statement could be interpreted as applying only to those who are wilfully separated from the faith and from Catholic unity.

By clear implication, though obviously not with the explicitness of the *Suprema haec sacra*, the encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore* brings out the fact that the dogma of the Catholic Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation means that the Church is necessary in two ways. First, it is necessary with the necessity of precept since God Himself has commanded all men to dwell within this society. Then, it is also necessary with the necessity of means since it has been constituted by God Himself as a factor apart from which men will not and cannot obtain the Beatific Vision.

The third and most difficult lesson of the encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore* on the subject of the Church's necessity for salvation is to be found in its teaching on the possibility of salvation for persons invincibly ignorant of the true religion. What the encyclical has to say on this point is contained in a single long and highly complicated sentence:

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It is known to Us and to you that those who labor in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion, and who, carefully observing the natural law and its precepts which God has inscribed in the hearts of all, and who, being ready to obey God, live an honest and upright life, can, through the working of the divine light and grace, attain eternal life, since God, who clearly sees, inspects and knows the minds, the intentions, the thoughts and the habits of all, will, by reason of His supreme goodness and kindness, never allow anyone who has not the guilt of wilful sin to be punished by eternal sufferings.

This sentence is tremendously rich in theological implication. It can never be adequately understood other than against the background and in the context of the Catholic theology of grace and of sin. Unfortunately this sentence has sometimes been explained in an inadequate manner.

In order to have an adequate and accurate analysis of this teaching we must see clearly, first of all, what precise class of people Pope Pius IX refers to in this sentence. They are people who are described as carefully or diligently (*sedulo*) obeying the natural law. They are prepared to obey God. They lead an honest and upright life. And they are invincibly ignorant of the true Catholic religion.

Now it is perfectly obvious that this description does not apply to all the individuals who are invincibly ignorant of the Catholic Church and of the Catholic faith. Invincible ignorance is by no means a sacrament, communicating goodness of life to those who are afflicted with it. The fact that a man is invincibly ignorant of the true religion does not in any way guarantee that he will observe the natural law zealously, that he will be ready to obey God, or that he will actually lead an upright life.

The invincibly ignorant people described by Pope Pius IX in the encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, however, have attained their spiritual position by co-operating with divine grace. It must be clearly understood, of course, that people in the state of sin, people who are not co-operating with God's grace, can perform works that are good. The *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, however, speaks of persons who are carefully

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or zealously observing the natural law and who are leading honest and upright lives. Such individuals are not turned away from God by sin.

Actually the persons of the kind described here in the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* are most probably in the state of sanctifying grace, and hence they are individuals who have true faith, hope, and charity. It is, of course, a dogma of the Church that not all the works or acts of people in the state of sin are actually sins against God. Apart from any supernatural aid of divine grace a sinner is capable of performing some naturally good works and of avoiding individual mortal and venial sins. But in order to avoid mortal sin for a long time a man needs the aid of supernatural divine grace.[4] In order to observe all the precepts of the natural law over any considerable period of time, men must most probably be strengthened by sanctifying grace itself. They certainly could not do this without some supernatural help of divine grace.

This is precisely the condition described in the encyclical of Pope Pius IX. The pertinent passage of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* refers only to those persons invincibly ignorant of the true Catholic religion who, at the same time, are diligently observing the natural law, are prepared to obey God, and are leading honest and upright lives. Such individuals are obviously not merely avoiding some mortal sins and doing some good deeds. Rather they are continuing over

[4] Cf. The Salmanticenses, *Cursus theologicus* (Paris and Brussels, 1878), IX, tract. XIV, disp. 2, dub. 5, 223 ff.; Billuart, *Cursus theologiae* (Paris, 1904), III, *Tractatus de gratia*, diss. III, art. 5, 6, 343 ff. Billuart teaches that "fallen man cannot obey the entire natural law *quoad substantiam* without *gratia sanans*" (344), and that "fallen man in the state of mortal sin cannot, without a special and superadded grace of God, avoid for a long time (*diu*) all mortal sins against the natural law and overcome all temptations [against the natural law]" (348).

The Thomistic theologians point to the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa theologica*, Ia-IIae, q. 109, a. 4 and 8. They appeal especially to one statement of the *magisterium*, that of the sixteenth Council of Carthage, can. 3: "Likewise it has pleased [the Council] that whoever shall have said that the grace of God by which a man is justified through Jesus Christ Our Lord is good only for the remission of sins that have already been committed, but not as a help to prevent sins being committed, should be anathema" (*Denz.*, 103).

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a long period of time to obey the precepts of the natural law and to avoid serious offense against God. Otherwise it would not be correct to say that they were leading honest and upright lives.

But whether, as seems most probable, the individuals referred to in this section of the encyclical are in the state of grace, or they are being moved by actual grace in the direction of justification, it is important to note that the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* teaches that they "can, *through the working of the divine light and grace,* attain eternal life." Obviously there is no hint here that these people are in a position to attain eternal life or salvation other than "within" the Catholic Church. There is, however, a definite implication that they can be saved even though they remain invincibly ignorant of the true religion.

The "divine light" to which the encyclical refers is, of course, the illumination of true supernatural faith. No one is going to attain the Beatific Vision unless he has passed from this life with faith, accepting as true, on the authority of God Himself, the supernatural teaching that God has revealed.

The "grace" spoken of in the document is ultimately sanctifying or justifying grace, the quality by which men are rendered connaturally able to act on the divine level, and to live as adopted sons of God and as brothers of Jesus Christ. The man who possesses this quality has always, along with it, the full panoply of the supernatural or infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The supreme virtue in all of this supernatural organism is that of charity. No one is going to attain to the Beatific Vision unless he leaves this life in possession of sanctifying grace, charity, and the virtues of which charity is at once the crown and the bond of perfection. Actual graces tend to move a sinner toward the possession of sanctifying grace in the Church.

Now, that faith which is absolutely requisite for the attainment of eternal life is definitely not a mere willingness to believe. It is the actual acceptance, as perfectly true, of the supernatural message which God has revealed. Specifically,

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it is the acceptance of the message which God has revealed through Our Lord Jesus Christ, the teaching which theology designates as divine public revelation.

The divine public revelation is composed of a certain number of truths or statements. It is quite manifest that genuine and supernatural divine faith can exist and does exist in individuals who have no clear and distinct awareness of some of these truths, but who simply accept them as they are contained or implied in other doctrines. But, in order that faith may exist, there certainly must be some minimum of teachings which are grasped distinctly by the believer and within which the rest of the revealed message is implied or implicit. Catholic theology holds that it is possible to have genuine divine faith when two, or, according to some writers, four, of these revealed truths are believed distinctly or explicitly. There can be real divine faith when a man believes explicitly, on the authority of God revealing, the existence of God as the Head of the supernatural order, the fact that God rewards good and punishes evil, and the doctrines of the Blessed Trinity and of the Incarnation.

It is definitely not a teaching of the Catholic theologians that there can be no true act of divine and supernatural faith apart from an explicit awareness and acceptance of the Catholic religion as the true religion and of the Catholic Church as the true kingdom of God. On the contrary, it is the common teaching of the theologians that true supernatural faith can exist even where there is only an implicit belief in the Catholic Church and in the Catholic religion. This, in the last analysis, is the fact brought out in the *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, when that document tells us that a person invincibly ignorant of the true religion can attain eternal life through the workings of the divine light and of grace.

Any act of genuine supernatural divine faith, however comparatively poor it may be in explicit content, can be the intellectual basis for an act of divine charity. True supernatural charity is an act of the love of benevolence and friendship for God known supernaturally, in the light of the Beatific

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Vision in the next world, or in the light of divine faith in this life. Any man who believes in God with true supernatural divine faith can, with the help of God's grace, love Him as He is known in this way. And this supernatural love for God, if it is a love of benevolence and friendship, is the act of divine charity.

Sanctifying grace always accompanies the love of charity. The man who dies in the state of sanctifying grace will inevitably attain to the Beatific Vision. Hence, since it is possible for a man to have genuine supernatural faith and charity and the life of sanctifying grace, without having a distinct and explicit knowledge of the true Church and of the true religion, it is possible for this man to be saved with only an implicit knowledge and desire of the Church.

The *Quanto conficiamur moerore* explained that God will "never allow anyone who has not the guilt of wilful sin to be punished by eternal sufferings (*minime patiatur, quempiam aeternis puniri suppliciis, qui voluntariae culpae reatum non habeat*)." In this way the Sovereign Pontiff once again focussed attention on the fact that there is no such thing as neutrality toward God, the Head of the supernatural order. Every individual in the world is either in the state of grace, the condition of supernatural friendship with God, or in the state of sin, the state of aversion from Him. Infants who die unbaptized pass from this life in the state of sin, but they have no personal or actual offenses against God. They are not being punished, properly speaking, when they are not admitted to the Beatific Vision. They are simply being deprived of something which does not belong to them, something which their first earthly father, Adam, abdicated for them or renounced for them when he committed his sin of disobedience against God.

On the other hand, those who live to attain the use of reason are likewise either in the state of grace or in the state of sin. In the case of these individuals, however, it is the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas and of his commentators that, if they do not possess the life of sanctifying grace, they are

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in the state of mortal sin. We find this teaching, which must be understood if we are going to have any really theological grasp of the dogma of the Catholic Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation, in the article of the *Summa theologica* in which St. Thomas considers and answers the question about the possibility of a man's being in a condition in which he would be in the state of original sin and guilty of venial, but not mortal, sin. The translation of the body of the article runs as follows:

> I answer saying that it is impossible that venial sin should be in anyone together with original sin but without mortal sin. The reason is that, before anyone arrives at the age of discretion, the defect of age that prevents the use of reason excuses him from mortal sin. Hence, for a much greater reason, it excuses him from venial sin if he should perform some act which would be *ex genere suo* a venial sin. But when he shall have begun to have the use of reason, he is not entirely excused from the guilt of venial and mortal sin. But the first thing which then occurs to a man to think of is to consider about himself. And if he should order himself to the proper end, through grace he obtains the remission of original sin. But if, on the other hand, he does not set himself toward the proper end, according to the capacity for discretion he has at that age, he will sin mortally, not doing what he is able to do (*non faciens quod in se est*). And from that time on, venial sin will not be in him without mortal sin until after the whole has been forgiven in him by grace.[5]

In answer to the third objection raised against his conclusion St. Thomas brings out the ultimate foundation of this teaching. "The first thing," he tells us, "that occurs to a man having discretion [the use of reason] is to think of that to which he may order other things as to an end. But the end is prior in the order of intention. Consequently, it is at this time that a man is bound by that affirmative divine precept which the Lord expressed in the words: 'Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you.'"[6]

Back of this teaching of the *Summa theologica* is the realistic and dynamic appreciation of the order of salvation which,

[5] Ia-IIae, q. 89, a. 6.

[6] *Ibid.*, ad 3. The scriptural citation is from *Zac.*, I: 3.

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unfortunately, has been somewhat obscured for some individual teachers by a defective type of casuistry. The teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas takes cognizance of the fact that the adult human being in the state of grace is not merely one endowed by God with a certain supernatural quality, but is actually a person who, by the force of that quality and the various supernatural and actual graces he has received from God, is really working for the attainment of God's supernatural glory. The person who has the use of reason and who is in possession of the state of grace is one who lives a life motivated by the act of supernatural charity.

On the other hand, the individual whose life is motivated by a purpose other than that of divine charity is working for some purpose other than the one God wills to have. This man is working against God's orders. He is badly disposed toward God. He is in a condition of aversion from God, his only final and supernatural End. He is in the condition or state of mortal sin.

Hence, any man who has the use of reason and who dies in a state of aversion from God is turned away from God through his own fault. If he does not attain the Beatific Vision, it is because of a free choice he has made to work for some ultimate purpose distinct from and opposed to the one which God Himself has set for him. He is in a position in which he is justly subject to punishment by God Himself.

So it is that the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* teaches us that God punishes with everlasting torments only those men who have passed from this life in a state of aversion from Him which they have freely chosen by a sinful act.

On the other hand, the decision to work for the end of divine and supernatural charity is an act of love for the Triune God. As such it is the terminus of the process of conversion. It is the act which necessarily carries with it hatred and detestation of sin which offends God, and thus the act in which sin itself is remitted.

In its insistence upon the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation, the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* points clearly

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to the truth that, in every person who is effectively moved by God's grace to make this act of supernatural charity, this decision must, by God's own institution, involve at least a sincere and genuine desire to enter His Church. In the actual designs of the Triune God, the desire to love Him and to please Him as He is known supernaturally in the light of true divine faith is such that it must include the intention, either explicit or implicit, of entering and remaining within His supernatural kingdom. Where the intention of charity does not exist in a man who has the use of reason, that man is in a condition of voluntary aversion from the living God. And where there is not at least an intention of entering into and remaining within God's true supernatural kingdom, there can be no true charity.

On this point the teachers of sacred theology frequently encounter reactions and criticisms stemming, in the last analysis, from an anthropomorphic concept of God. Some people profess to see in this portion of Catholic doctrine factors in some way opposed to the truths of the divine justice and mercy. The context of the *Singulari quadam* and the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* make it quite clear that such attitudes existed in the days of Pope Pius IX.

People who adopt such attitudes come to imagine that, according to this section of Catholic doctrine, God is represented as being in a way less generous than His creatures. They claim to believe that, in making the Church necessary, both with the necessity of precept and the necessity of means, for the attainment of man's eternal salvation, God has placed some men in an impossible situation. They claim that the Catholic teaching on this point represents the man who has never heard the Gospel preached as utterly incapable of making the decision to love God with the love of charity, and that thus it depicts such an individual as shut off from eternal salvation through no fault of his own.

Basically, such attitudes are founded on anthropomorphism, the intellectual fault according to which God is represented in the guise of man. The people who adopt these attitudes forget that the movement toward conversion and salvation must

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begin with God Himself rather than with His creatures. God is the *Ipsum intelligere subsistens,* the ultimate Source of all being and activity in the natural and the supernatural orders. If a man moves toward conversion and salvation, it is because God has moved him, and moved him with infallible efficacy to make a genuinely free decision. If God moves one of His creatures toward the eternal possession of Himself in the Beatific Vision, this act of God's will not and cannot be frustrated.

Or, to consider the same truth from another angle, the man who freely chooses to love God with the affection of charity, to serve God and to work to please Him in all things, makes this decision precisely because he is being moved to it by God's grace. God is the First Cause and the First Mover in this free decision just as He is with reference to every other act in all the created universe. The omnipotent, all-just, and all-merciful God will not and cannot allow a person who freely desires to love Him with the supernatural love of charity to lack what he needs for the accomplishment of this desire precisely because the desire itself is the work of His grace.

Hence there could not possibly be a situation in which a man would really love God and order his life to God's service and, at the same time, he debarred from the benefit of salvation by a lack of factors God has established as necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation. Such a situation would be nothing more or less than a frustration of God's own activity. God owes it to Himself to see to it that the grace He gives is not useless and impotent.

Man can freely choose to make the love of the Triune God the ultimate motivating force of his own life. If he makes such a choice, he makes it freely by the power of divine grace. On the other hand, he can also freely decide to set up some end other than God as the final objective of his activities, or even an end in defiance of God. It is only when he dies thus freely turned away from God that he will deserve to be, and will be, punished with everlasting sufferings.

Finally, if we are to grasp this portion of Catholic doctrine, we must realize what we may call the order or the procedure

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of sacred theology. We do not and we must not give full rein to our imaginations and try to conjure up situations in which we come to fancy that God has been less than just or merciful to some individual men or classes of men in establishing the Catholic Church as a necessary means for the attainment of eternal salvation. Rather we must fix our attention on the paramount truth that the One who has thus instituted the Church as the social unit outside which no one can be saved is not only just and merciful, but is subsistent Justice and Mercy.

Thus the teaching of the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* can be summed up in the following statements:

(1) It is a very serious error to hold that men who live apart from the true faith and Catholic unity can attain eternal life if they die in this condition.

(2) The person who is invincibly ignorant of the true religion, and who sedulously obeys the natural law, lives an honest and upright life, and is prepared to obey God, can be saved through the workings of divine light and grace.

(3) Such a person has already chosen God as his ultimate End. He has done this in an act of charity. He is in the state of grace, and not in the state of original or mortal sin. In this act of charity there is involved an implicit desire of entering and remaining within God's true supernatural kingdom. Such a person has had his sins remitted "within" the true Church of Jesus Christ.

(4) The Church is requisite for the attainment of eternal salvation with both the necessity of means (no one at all can be saved unless he dies either as a member of the Church or with a genuine and sincere desire—either explicit or implicit—of entering the Church and remaining within it), and with the necessity of precept (contumacious refusal to enter the Church or to remain within it is mortally sinful).

(5) It is the duty of Catholics to help the needy outside the fold, and it is primarily their duty to bring these people to the acceptance of God's revealed truth insofar as they are able to do so.

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VI

THE ENCYCLICAL *MYSTICI CORPORIS CHRISTI*

Certainly one of the most important statements of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* to have appeared during the course of the twentieth century is the encyclical letter *Mystici Corporis Christi*, issued by Pope Pius XII on June 29, 1943. In many ways this document has given prodigious help to that portion of sacred theology which studies the necessity of the Catholic Church for the attainment of eternal salvation.

Three sections of the encyclical are particularly pertinent to our thesis. The first of these deals directly with the nature of membership in the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.

> Only those who have been baptized, who profess the true faith, who have not miserably separated themselves from the fabric of the Body and who have not, by reason of very serious crimes, been expelled by legitimate authority, are actually to be counted as members of the Church. The Apostle says: "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free." Therefore, just as, in the true assembly of Christ's faithful, there is only one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one baptism, so there can be only one faith. Consequently, the one who would refuse to hear the Church is, by the Lord's command, to be considered as the heathen and the publican. Hence those who are in various ways separated [from the Church] in faith or rule cannot be living in one Body of this kind and cannot be living by its divine Spirit.[1]

In this passage the Roman Pontiff has set forth the conditions or factors which, taken together, constitute a man as a member of the true Church of Jesus Christ. They are:

(1) The possession of the baptismal character.

(2) The profession of the true faith.

(3) The profession of willingness to be subject to the

[1] *Denz.*, 2286; *AAS*, XXXV, 202 f.

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legitimate authorities within the Church, and thus to be associated with the society of Our Lord's disciples.

(4) The fact of not having been excommunicated, in the full meaning of the term.

This was in substance the teaching on membership in the true Church of Jesus Christ which was given in the writings of Dominic Báñez.[2] It was developed and popularized by St. Robert Bellarmine in his book *De ecclesia militante*.[3] Many of the very prominent and able ecclesiologists who were contemporaries of Bannez and of St. Robert disagreed with them rather sharply on this issue. Over the course of the years, however, the teaching now set forth in the *Mystici Corporis Christi* came to attain the status of commonly accepted doctrine among the scholastic ecclesiologists. The statement of this teaching in the encyclical of Pope Pius XII constituted its official acceptance and promulgation by the Church's *magisterium* as Catholic doctrine.

Thus it is the teaching of the Catholic Church itself that all of the four factors just mentioned, and only these four factors, are required to constitute a man as a member of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. Since the concept of membership in the true Church is intimately and essentially connected with the thesis that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church, it is quite obvious that this statement in the *Mystici Corporis Christi* gives us tremendously valuable aid for the explanation of this section of sacred theology.

According to the meaning the term bears today, a member of the true Church of God is one of the men or women who compose the society which is today, has been since the time of Our Lord's death, and will be until the end of time, the true and only supernatural kingdom of God in this world. The central and basic truth of ecclesiology is the fact that, in

[2] Cf. Báñez, *Scholastica Commentaria in Secundam Secundae Angelici Doctoris D. Thomae* (Venice, 1588), col. 153, 262.

[3] The second chapter of St. Robert's *De ecclesia militante* contains his teaching on membership in the true Church, embodied and crystallized in his classical definition of the Church. The following eight chapters are devoted to the explanation and the defense of this teaching.

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the dispensation of the New Testament, the social unit within which men may attain salvific contact with God in Jesus Christ, the group of men in this world designated in the Scripture as God's kingdom and as the Body of Christ, is the organized religious society in communion with and subject to the direction of the Bishop of Rome. Any organized or real society and social unit which can be called a society in the strict sense of the term, is composed of individual human beings who manifest their willingness to work together for the attainment of the purpose the society was instituted to achieve, and to work for it under the direction of those endowed with legitimate authority within this society. These individual human beings are designated as members of the society. And, according to the present usage of the term, the individual human beings who together go to make up the religious society over which the Roman Pontiff rules as Our Lord's Vicar on earth are called the members of the true Church or of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ on earth.

Incidentally, it is helpful here to specify that this holds true according to the meaning which has been attached to the term "*membrum ecclesiae*" since the latter part of the sixteenth century, and thus, according to the meaning which the expression "member of the Church" bears today. In earlier treatises on the Church, as, for instance in Cardinal John de Turrecremata's classical *Summa de ecclesia*, a *membrum ecclesiae* is a Catholic in the state of sanctifying grace.[4] The term employed by such earlier theologians to designate what we call today a member of the Church was "*pars ecclesiae*."

The reason for this discrepancy in wording is to be found in the fact that the earlier writers on the Church preferred to employ the term "member" in line with the Scriptural metaphor of "the Body of Christ" as a name of the Catholic Church. In this context the term "body" (the Greek "σῶμα"

[4] Cf. Turrecremata, *Summa de ecclesia* (Venice, 1561), c. 57, p. 69r. In this passage Turrecremata appeals to and cites the teaching of St. Thomas in the *Summa theologica*, IIIa, q. 8, a. 3, although his teaching is rather a modification than a mere repetition of that of St. Thomas.

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and the Latin "*corpus*") was obviously understood as referring primarily to a living physical body, a body of a living man. In what is still its primary meaning as indicated by some dictionaries of the English language, and in what originally appears to have been its only proper significance, the term "*membrum*" had an anatomical connotation and served to indicate a living part of a physical body.

In their explanations of the fact that the Church can be described accurately under the metaphor of Christ's Body, the older authors of treatises *de ecclesia* were faced with the question as to how people who are spiritually dead can be within the living Body which is the Church. They tended to answer by distinguishing between Catholics in the state of grace, who are in the Church as living parts of a living Body, and those in the state of mortal sin, who are actually parts of the Church and contained within it, but who do not share in the supernatural life of this community. The first group, the Catholics in the state of grace, could be designated metaphorically as "members" of the Church. The second group were parts of this society, but, according to their metaphorical use of the term, could not be called members at all.

Later, however, "member" in common parlance came to mean in a proper, and not merely in a metaphorical way, one of the individuals composing a society. In accordance with this tendency, and particularly through the influence of prominent theologians like St. Robert Bellarmine and Francis Sylvius, the Catholic schools came to abandon the practice of restricting the meaning of the term "*membrum ecclesiae*" to Catholics in the state of grace and to use it to signify also what had previously been designated as "*pars ecclesiae.*" [5] This change, originally made to avoid any ambiguity or confusion that might have followed from the earlier use of the term, was accepted everywhere. So it is that the "members of the Church," spoken of in the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, are all of the individual human beings who together

[5] Cf. Fenton, "Membership in the Church," in *AER*, CXII, 4 (April, 1945), 294.

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constitute the organized society which is, in fact, the true and only supernatural kingdom of God on earth in the dispensation of the New Testament. When, in this book, the term "member of the Church" is employed, it is always and everywhere used with this meaning.

Now from the very beginning of the Church, Catholic controversy against the spokesmen for the various heresies that have arisen has centered around the closely connected notions of membership in the Church and the Church's necessity for salvation. As long as they made any pretense at all of being followers of Our Lord, the defenders of the heresies (and particularly the early Protestant leaders) never ventured to question the fact that there exists in this world a social unit of some kind within which alone men may achieve salvific association with Our Lord. They, like the Catholics themselves, were completely certain and insistent that there is a true Church and that outside of that true Church there is no salvation. On this point there was one, and only one, basic issue in dispute between the Catholics and the heretics, the question as to exactly what the status of this supernatural kingdom of God is in this world.

The Catholic answer to that question was the assertion of the divinely revealed truth that, in the status of the New Testament dispensation, the organized religious society over which the Bishop of Rome presides *is* the supernatural kingdom of God on earth. It insisted upon the fact that the social unit headed by the Roman Pontiff is the very same reality which is designated as the supernatural kingdom of God or the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ in this world.

On the other hand, the various types of heretics all contended in one way or another that the social unit known as the true *ecclesia* or the true supernatural kingdom of God on earth was not an organized society at all, but the sum-total of all the good people, or all the predestined people, or all the people of good will in the world.

The heretical thesis had all the specious and disarming simplicity which characterizes so many errors. For one thing,

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it did away with any difficulty about the difference between being a member of the Church and being "within" the Church in such a way as to be able to attain salvation in it. If the New Testament kingdom of God on earth is depicted as an unorganized group, and as a social unit to which one belongs only by reason of the possession of spiritual gifts undetectable with certainty by other men, then a man would belong to it or be within it only through his possession of those gifts. Thus, to belong to the group and to be living the life of grace would be one and the same thing. If a person dies in the state of grace, he will attain the Beatific Vision. He will be saved for all eternity. Thus the heretical position was basically and deceptively simple. According to that teaching, persons who die in the state of grace die as belonging to the supernatural kingdom of God on earth in the only way anyone can possibly belong to it.

The only trouble with the heretical position was that it was completely at variance with what Our Lord had taught about His kingdom on earth. According to the contention of the heretics, Our Lord would have been mistaken, for instance, in His description of the purification of His kingdom which is to be effected at the time of the general judgment. As they described God's kingdom, it never could have been purified in any way. The only people who composed it, even in this world, were people in the state of grace, people loving God with the supernatural affection of divine charity.

The Catholic truth on this point is comparatively complicated. On the one hand, there is the fact that the New Testament kingdom of God on earth actually *is* the organized society called the Catholic Church, the religious organization within which the Bishop of Rome is the supreme visible leader. On the other hand, it is no less a fact that a man can die as one of the individuals who compose the Catholic Church and can still be lost for all eternity and that a non-member of the Church can die as being "within" the Church in such a way as to attain to the Beatific Vision.

In order to explain this set of divinely revealed truths about

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the Church militant of the New Testament, the theologians of the Catholic Church have traditionally employed a distinction between two different sets of factors which bind us to Our Lord in His Mystical Body. This distinction was first brought out in the anti-Donatist writings of St. Augustine. It was elaborated by the first group of counter-Reformation theologians, particularly by the Louvain writers, James Latomus and John Driedo. St. Robert Bellarmine summarized and popularized it in his masterpiece, the book *De ecclesia militante*.[6] Since the time of St. Robert this distinction has formed an integral part of traditional or scholastic ecclesiology. The encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* utilized this distinction and thus gave it the sanction of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*.

> And since, as We have said above, the social Body of Christ, according to the intention of its Founder, ought to be something visible, the union (*conspiratio*) of all its members must likewise be outwardly manifested by the profession of the same faith, the communion of the same sacraments, the sharing of the same sacrifice, and finally by the actual observance of the same laws. Moreover, it is entirely necessary that there should be a supreme head, visible to all, by whom the mutually helpful labors of all may be effectively directed to the attainment of the end proposed [for the society]. We call this visible head the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth. For, just as the Divine Redeemer sent the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, to take care of the invisible government of the Church, He likewise commissioned Peter and his successors to conduct the visible government of the Church in His Name.
>
> But to these juridical bonds, which are sufficient in their own line (*quae iam ratione sui sufficiunt*), in such a way that they far surpass the bonds of any other human society, even the highest, it is necessary to add another factor of unity by which we are most intimately joined together among ourselves and with God by reason of the three virtues, Christian faith, hope, and charity.[7]

The declaration of *Mystici Corporis Christi* on the nature of membership in the true Church of Jesus Christ is, in the last analysis, a statement of the fact that these outward or juridical bonds alone suffice to constitute a man as a member

[6] Cf. *De ecclesia militante*, c. 2.

[7] *AAS*, XXXV, 227.

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or a part of the organization which is actually the supernatural kingdom of God according to the dispensation of the New Testament. Thus in a final and intensely practical way the encyclical insisted on the truth that the visible society we know as the Catholic Church actually is the community called the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. It did this precisely by showing that the Mystical Body is a true organized society, a visible association whose members can be known by externally recognizable characteristics.

Those who are at all acquainted with the popular literature of ecclesiology prior to the issuance of the *Mystici Corporis Christi* do not need to be told how badly this teaching was needed. During the early part of our century there had developed a tendency on the part of some Catholic writers to attempt an over-simplified explanation of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation. According to these men, any person who is saved dies as a member of the Catholic Church.

They insisted that many of those who are saved pass from this life as members of non-Catholic religious communities or without any religious affiliation at all. Yet they contended that these same individuals were really though invisibly members of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Thus, according to their doctrine, the visible society which the world knows as the Catholic Church, the religious society in communion with and subject to the Roman Pontiff, was not completely and exactly the same thing as the Mystical Body of Christ, outside which no one can attain eternal salvation. By direct and necessary implication their teaching led to the inference that the true Mystical Body of Christ was not an organization or a society at all, since they held that this social unit could have true and genuine members who were not in any way recognizable as members or parts of the community directed by the Bishop of Rome.

The section of *Mystici Corporis Christi* that deals with the requisites for membership in the Church ends with the warning that "those who are in various ways separated [from the

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Mystical Body of Christ] in faith or rule cannot be living in this Body and cannot be living by its divine Spirit."

To live by the divine Spirit of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ is to live the life of sanctifying grace. Thus it is the teaching of this encyclical that people who are separated from the Church in belief and in rule cannot be living the life of sanctifying grace and cannot possess the virtue of charity. Of course this teaching implies that all the people who are living the life of sanctifying grace and who are motivated by the love of charity are in some way joined or united to Our Lord's true Church in its faith and in its government.

The Church, in its teaching about its own necessary connection with eternal salvation, has always taken cognizance of the fact that non-members of the Mystical Body of Christ can possess the life of sanctifying grace and can elicit the act of charity. At the same time, however, it has always insisted upon the fact that no person who is truly separated from it in faith and in charity can be living the supernatural life of sanctifying grace. Hence the theologians of the Church have set out to explain how an individual who is not a member of the Church could be united with it in such a way as to possess this life of grace. Since the time of Thomas Stapleton and St. Robert Bellarmine, scholastic ecclesiology has explained this salvific union with the Church on the part of a non-Catholic in terms of a sincere desire or intention on the part of the non-member of the Church to enter this society and to remain within it. They showed that a person who seeks and prays for the favor of incorporation into the true supernatural kingdom on earth cannot be said to be truly separated from that society in its faith and in its rule.

The Catholic Church and its theologians had likewise taught that a sincere desire to enter and to remain within the Church could be effective for the attainment of eternal salvation even when that desire was merely implicit, that is, not based on a clear and distinct notion of the Church itself. Previous statements of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*, like the *Singulari quadam* and the *Quanto conficiamur moerore* had

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taken cognizance of this teaching, without, however, distinctly mentioning any implicit desire. The encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, in referring explicitly to this factor, thus advanced the study of that portion of sacred theology which deals with the true Church of Jesus Christ. It made that contribution in a section in which it points to the possibility of salvation for a person who is joined to the Church only by an implicit but sincere and genuine desire of entering it, and, at the same time, indicates the spiritual insecurity that characterizes the position of such an individual.

> As you know very well, Venerable Brethren, from the beginning of Our Pontificate, We have entrusted even those who do not belong to the visible structure (*compagem*) of the Catholic Church to the heavenly protection and direction, solemnly asserting that, following the example of the Good Shepherd, We wanted nothing more than that they should have life and have it more abundantly. Begging the prayers of the entire Church, We wish to repeat Our solemn declaration in this encyclical letter in which We have praised the great and glorious Body of Christ, most affectionately inviting each and every one of them [those who are not members of the Church] to co-operate generously and willingly with the inward impulses of divine grace and to take care to extricate themselves from that condition in which they cannot be secure about their own eternal salvation. For even though they may be directed towards the Redeemer's Mystical Body by a sort of unconscious desire and intention (*etiamsi inscio quodam desiderio ac voto ad mysticum Redemptoris Corpus ordinentur*), they still lack so many and such great heavenly helps and aids that can be enjoyed only in the Catholic Church.[8]

The people whom the Holy Father describes as not being "secure" about the affair of their own eternal salvation are non-members of the Church who have no clear or explicit intention of entering this society. This is evident from the context itself. He is speaking of "those who do not belong to the visible structure of the Catholic Church (*qui ad adspectabilem non pertinent Catholicae Ecclesiae compagem*)," and of people who may be ordered or directed to the Church by a kind of unconscious intention and desire. Thus the condi-

[8] *Ibid.*, 243.

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tions he sets down are such as to exclude both members of the Church and non-Catholics who are clearly aware of the Church and explicitly desirous of joining it.

At this point, incidentally, it is well to point out the misleading and somewhat inaccurate character of the expression "visible body of the Catholic Church," employed in this place by many published translations of the encyclical. The Latin term here rendered as "body" is the word "*compages.*" Actually this has the sense of a joining together, a structure, or a composition. Furthermore, in view of the eccentric terminology which has sometimes been employed in popular religious works treating of the Church as Our Lord's Mystical Body and dealing with the dogma of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation, it was somewhat unfortunate that people should be led to believe that the encyclical itself spoke of a visible body of the Catholic Church. There was always the danger that people might be misled, through the influence of unscientific treatises written before the publication of the *Mystici Corporis Christi*, to imagine that such a terminology permitted them to hold that there could be such a thing as an invisible body of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Father, in the encyclical, brings out the fact that, from the very beginning of his pontificate, he has been praying to God for the eternal salvation of non-Catholics, as well as for the salvation of the members of the true Church. He has begged God to take care of all of them, and to grant that they might have life and have it more abundantly. In acting thus, the Sovereign Pontiff was acting according to the commission he had received from God. He is the Vicar of Christ on earth. Our Lord, whose Vicar he is, had said, in defining the basic aim of His own mission: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." [9]

Now, the text of the *Mystici Corporis Christi* makes it quite clear that the Holy Father knows and teaches that this supernatural life of sanctifying grace can be possessed only

[9] *John*, 10: 10.

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by those who are in some way "within" or in vital contact with the Catholic Church. The non-members of the Church who have no explicit intention of joining or entering it *can* have the life of grace, but only if they are ordered or disposed toward the Church by a certain unconscious intention or desire. By the clearest sort of inference, then, the teaching of the Roman Pontiff thus implies that non-members of the Catholic Church who have not even an implicit desire or intention to enter the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ are not in a position in which they can possess the supernatural life of sanctifying grace. This, of course, is the very teaching brought out so effectively by Pope Boniface VIII in the *Unam sanctam*, when he declared that there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins outside the Catholic Church.

In the *Mystici Corporis Christi* Pope Pius XII asserts true Catholic doctrine by teaching that a non-member of the Church who is within the Church only in the sense that he has an unconscious or implicit desire of entering it as a member *can* possess the supernatural life of sanctifying grace. At the same time, however, he brings out a lesson much needed by some of the writers of our generation when he points out the fact that people who are within the Church only by an unconscious desire cannot be secure about the affair of their eternal salvation precisely because they "still lack so many and such great heavenly helps and aids that can be enjoyed only in the Catholic Church."

Here the expression "in the Catholic Church" obviously means "in the membership of the Catholic Church." Manifestly the Holy Father is referring to the incomparable spiritual advantages which a man may enjoy ("*licet frui*," in the words of the Latin text of the encyclical) as a member of the Catholic Church which are not and cannot be available to him if he is "within" the Church only in the sense that he has an implicit desire to enter it and to remain in it. These advantages are such as to give the man who possesses them a kind of relative security about the affair of his eternal salvation. Any person who does not enjoy membership in the true Church cannot possibly possess such security.

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The encyclical speaks of non-members of the Church who have a true and sincere, though merely implicit, desire of entering it as being in a situation "in which they cannot be secure about their eternal salvation (*in quo de sempiterna cuiusque salute securi esse non possunt*)." Many of the published translations of the *Mystici Corporis Christi* employ the expression "in which they cannot be sure of their salvation" in rendering this clause into English. This terminology is both inexact and seriously misleading. In our language "sure" is one of the synonyms of the word "certain." The Holy Father quite definitely did not mean to imply, in denying that people who are within the Church only by way of an explicit desire or intention are "*securi*" about their own salvation, that members of the true Church may be certain that they are predestined by God to the glory of heaven.

As a matter of fact, the Council of Trent, in its famous Decree on Justification, has warned us solemnly on this subject.

> And no one, as long as he is living in this mortal condition, ought to be so presumptuous on the subject of the hidden mystery of divine predestination as to decide with certainty that he is wholly in the number of the predestined, as if it were true that the man who has been justified were to be either unable to sin again or, if he should sin again, ought to promise himself a repentance that is certain. For, except by way of a special revelation, it cannot be known whom God has chosen unto Himself.[10]

Sureness or certainty of eternal salvation is one thing. The Church, through the Council of Trent, has told us that this certainty is unavailable other than by way of a special revelation from God Himself. But security in the line of eternal salvation is something else again. This is a favor which men may have as members of the Catholic Church, and only in this way. Such is the teaching of Pope Pius XII in the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi.*

Such security in the line of eternal salvation is, by its very nature, available only to the man who is in a position to enjoy and to utilize the various aids to the attainment of

[10] *Denz.*, 805.

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eternal life which God offers to men in His supernatural kingdom or *ecclesia*. Most of the content of the *Mystici Corporus Christi* is, as a matter of fact, devoted to the enumeration and the description of these factors which give security in the way of salvation to the man who is privileged to be a member of the true Church of Jesus Christ. In the light of the teaching of this encyclical, the advantages which are available only to members of the Catholic Church, and which are such as to afford a man a genuine security in the line of his own eternal salvation, may be summed up in terms of the outward bond of unity with Our Lord in His *ecclesia*. The factors of this so-called "outward bond" are, as a matter of fact, the qualities by which alone a man is constituted a member of the Church.

As we have seen, the *Mystici Corporis Christi* teaches us that "only those who have been baptized, who profess the true faith, who have not miserably separated themselves from the fabric of the Body and who have not, by reason of very serious crimes, been expelled by legitimate ecclesiastical authority, are actually to be counted as members of the Church." This is quite in accord with the teaching of St. Robert Bellarmine, who defines the Church militant of the New Testament as "the assembly of men united in the profession of the same Christian faith and in the communion of the same sacraments, under the rule of legitimate pastors, and in particular, that of the one Vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman Pontiff." [11] According to the teaching of the great Doctor of the Church, as expressed in the encyclical of Pope Pius XII, the constituents of this outward bond of unity by which men are made members of the true Church are: the Catholic profession of faith, the communion or communication of the ecclesiastical sacraments, and subjection to the rule of legitimate ecclesiastical pastors, and ultimately that of the Bishop of Rome. The advantages by which members of the true Church of Jesus Christ may be secure about the matter of their salvation are then to be found under these three headings.

[11] St. Robert, *loc. cit.*

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The first and the most fundamental of these advantages is that of the Catholic profession of the divine faith. The member of the Catholic Church is a part of the society within which the message Our Lord taught and preached as supernatural divine revelation is guarded and proposed infallibly. This message is the body of truth which men are meant to accept with the assent of divine faith. It is the body of divine public revelation. It is the teaching which God has given to man to guide and direct him toward the eternal possession of the Beatific Vision.

The member of the Catholic Church is in a position to receive this divine teaching in an adequate and accurate manner. The Church of which he is a member always has preached this message infallibly and will continue to preach and expound it infallibly until the end of time. As a matter of fact, the Church is the instrument of Christ the Teacher, who lives and instructs in the Church, which is His Mystical Body. One of the most beautiful and enlightening passages of the *Mystici Corporis Christi* brings out this truth very clearly. For, after assuring us that "Christ enlightens His whole Church, as numberless passages from the Sacred Scriptures and the holy Fathers prove," the encyclical tells us:

> And for us today, who linger on in this earthly exile, He is still the Author of our faith as, in our heavenly fatherland, He will be the One who completes it. It is He who imparts the light of faith to the faithful. It is He who enriches pastors and teachers, and above all His Vicar on earth, with the supernatural gifts of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, so that they may loyally preserve the treasury of the faith, defend it vigorously, and explain and confirm it with reverence and devotion. Finally it is He who, though unseen, presides over the Councils of the Church and guides them.[12]

It may, of course, be objected that the Church does not state that each and every one of its authoritative doctrinal pronouncements is presented precisely as an infallible proposition. Catholic theology takes cognizance of the fact that some of the doctrinal statements of the Church's ordinary

[12] *AAS*, XXXV, 216.

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teaching activity are not designated as infallible, although they certainly demand acceptance by the faithful with a true and inward act of assent. Does this fact, the existence within the body of the doctrinal acts of the Catholic Church, of statements which, while fully authoritative, are not covered by a guarantee of doctrinal infallibility, detract in any way from the advantage that accrues to the member of the Church from the point of view of the accuracy of the presentation of divinely revealed doctrine?

The answer is that it does not. The entire teaching activity of the universal Church of God on earth is covered by what the theologians, after Cardinal Franzelin, call the guarantee of "infallible security" as distinct from that of "infallible truth." [13] The primary objective of the Church's responsibility and authority in the doctrinal field is the accurate presentation and effective defense of the teaching which the Apostles handed over to the Church as divinely revealed. Such is the meaning conveyed in the Vatican Council's declaration of the Church's function with regard to divine faith.

> But since "without faith it is impossible to please God" and to attain to the fellowship of His children, it follows that justification never comes to any man without it [the faith], nor will anyone obtain eternal life unless he shall have persevered in it until the end. But in order that we may satisfy our obligation of embracing the true faith and persevering in it constantly, God, through His only-begotten Son, has established the Church, and has equipped it with manifest signs of the fact that He has instituted it, so that it may be acknowledged by all as the guardian and the teacher of the revealed word.[14]

Thus, according to the Vatican Council itself, one of the basic reasons for the existence of the true Church of God in this world is to make it possible for us to accept the divine faith and to persevere in our belief. The Church works in two different ways for the accomplishment of this, its doctrinal mission. First, it issues statements and definitions to which

[13] Cf. Franzelin, *De divina traditione et Scriptura* (Rome, 1875), pp. 127 ff.

[14] *Denz.*, 1793.

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the faithful must assent either by divine and Catholic faith or by what is sometimes called merely ecclesiastical faith. Again, it issues doctrinal decisions which are authoritative, that is, which must be received by the faithful with a true and inward act of religious assent, but which the Church itself does not propose as infallible. The first class of acts, those which can be rejected only at the cost of heresy or doctrinal error, have the infallibility of truth. The second class of statements or decisions, which can be rejected only at the cost of a sin of rashness against the faith or of doctrinal disobedience to the Church, have the guarantee of the infallibility of security. They are issued by the Church, not primarily as statements of truth to be accepted for its own sake, but rather as measures of security for the protection and the security of the divine faith. Our Lord, the Head of the Mystical Body, sees to it that these decisions accomplish the objective they were intended to attain. They really do protect the purity and the security of the faith itself.

Thus, in the field of the profession of the true Christian faith, the member of the Catholic Church has the indescribably important advantage of belonging to a society within which the revealed message of God is preserved, taught, and defended in such a way that the purity and the integrity of the faith is always protected. The person who is not a member of the true Church, but who is "within" it only by the force of an implicit desire or intention to enter it, has no such advantage. He has no visible and reliable immediate norm of belief whatsoever.

If such an individual is a member of a heretical religious organization, he is actually placed at a tremendous disadvantage along this line. The organization to which he pertains is one which presents, as the object of its own belief, a body of teaching quite distinct from that which God has revealed to mankind through His divine Son. It is of course true that the doctrinal message of the individual non-Catholic religious organization contains some statements which actually form a part of God's revealed teaching. It is possible for a man to

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make an act of divine faith by the acceptance of such teachings as certain on the authority of God who has revealed them. But the purity and the integrity of his belief is always threatened by the presence in the doctrinal assertions of the institution of which he is a member of statements at variance with the content of divine public revelation. And, given the fundamental necessity of the faith for the living of the supernatural life and for the attainment of eternal salvation, it is easy to see that the man who is not a member of the Catholic Church is at a tremendous disadvantage when compared with a Catholic.

What is true with regard to the profession of the Christian faith is likewise true with reference to the guidance God gives us through the government of the Catholic Church. The rule or government of the Catholic Church is, in the last analysis, a way in which Our Lord Himself guides and directs souls to the attainment of the Beatific Vision. When the *Mystici Corporis Christi* has finished speaking about the invisible direction or government God gives to men by direct action on the individual souls, it adds: "But we must not think that He rules only in a hidden or extraordinary manner. On the contrary, our Divine Redeemer also governs His Mystical Body in a visible and normal way through His Vicar on earth." [15]

The directions given by Our Lord Himself come not only through the rule of the Roman Pontiff over the universal Church militant of the New Testament, but also through the government of the individual local Churches by the residential Bishops to whom they have been assigned. The encyclical states: "What We have thus far said of the Universal Church must be understood also of the individual Christian communities, whether Oriental or Latin, which go to make up the one Catholic Church. For they too are ruled by Jesus Christ through the voice of their respective Bishops." [16]

The government of the universal Church by the Holy Father has a kind of practical infallibility attached to it, in the sense

[15] *AAS*, XXXV, 210. [16] *Ibid.*, 211.

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that it would be quite impossible for a man to lose his soul through obedience to the legislation of the universal Church militant of the New Testament.[17] As the beneficiary of this favor, and as one who is guided and directed by Our Lord Himself through the government of the Church, the Catholic has again a tremendous advantage in the living of the spiritual life. The religious direction which is visibly offered to a non-member of the Catholic Church by officials of the sect to which he may belong is definitely not in the same class with the visible rule and government of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

We must also realize that, in having access to the sacramental life of the Catholic Church, the Catholic enjoys another series of great advantages in the spiritual life. Most of those who are not members of the Church have not the benefit of any sacrament at all. The minority who are validly baptized do not usually have access to the Eucharist, or to the sacraments of penance, confirmation, and extreme unction. And we must not forget that, even in those dissident communities in which a valid priesthood has been retained and in which, as a consequence, the members may receive the Eucharist, they are approaching the sacrament and the sacrifice under circumstances definitely and objectively opposed to the expressed will of God.

It remains true that by reason of invincible ignorance, some of the members of these dissident and schismatical communities may receive the Eucharist and take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice fruitfully. Nevertheless the fact remains that this is possible only in terms of inculpable ignorance. The Eucharist is the sacrifice and the sacrament of charity. Objectively it belongs only within the confines of God's own supernatural kingdom. It is definitely not at home in any community distinct from and opposed to God's one true *ecclesia* here on earth. It is easy to see that the person who has even the valid Eucharist in a religious community apart from and opposed to the Catholic Church is at a great disadvantage compared with a member of the true Church.

[17] Cf. Billot, *De Ecclesia Christi*, 5th edition (Rome, 1927), I, 477-82.

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The great advantages in the possession of members of the Catholic Church and not available to people who are in the Church only by the force of an implicit desire or intention to enter it can thus be summed up under the headings of the authorized and infallible teaching of divine public revelation, the guidance by Our Lord through the government of the true Church, and the sacramental and liturgical life within the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. With these go the various blessings and prayers and indulgences which, together constitute a benefit beyond price for those who seek to serve God in the true Church of His Divine Son.

The non-member of the Catholic Church is comparatively insecure with regard to the affair of his salvation precisely because he lacks these benefits. Even though he should be in the state of grace and even though he should implicitly intend to enter the true Church, he has not the benefit of a visible and living *magisterium* which can speak to him with the voice and by the power of Our Lord Himself. He is not the beneficiary of a visible rule in which Our Lord Himself directs and guides His Church. And he cannot live, until he actually enters the Church as a member, the sacramental life within the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.

The encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* does more than indicate the insecurity of the man who is "within" the true Church only by reason of an implicit desire of entering it as a member. It also shows that the prayer of the Roman Pontiff and of the Church itself, expressing God's own will on this subject, is that such people actually become members of the Catholic Church. The encyclical continues:

> May they then enter into Catholic unity, and, united with us in the one association (*compagine*) of the Body of Jesus Christ, may they hasten to the one Head in the society of the most glorious love. With persevering prayer to the Spirit of love and truth, with open arms We wait for them to come back, not to a stranger's house, but to the house of their own Father.
>
> But while We want this unceasing prayer that all of those who have wandered away may enter as soon as possible into one fold of Christ to rise up to God from the entire Mystical Body, yet We

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declare that it is absolutely necessary that this be done freely and without compulsion, since no one may believe unless he wills to believe. Hence they are most certainly not genuine Catholics (*Christifideles*) who, not believing, are forced to enter a Church building, to approach the altar, and to receive the sacraments, for the faith "without which it is impossible to please God" is an entirely free service of intellect and will.[18]

This section of the *Mystici Corporis Christi* brings out the sometimes forgotten fact that it is always a good and desirable thing for a man who is "within" the Church only by desire actually to become a member of the Church. Prior to the issuance of this encyclical there was a tendency on the part of some Catholic writers in the field of ecclesiology to speak as if non-membership in the Church were, under certain circumstances at least, an acceptable thing for people who desired membership. This erroneous teaching was generally set forth by men who were deceived by the false œcumenicism against which Pope Pius XII protested in the encyclical *Humani generis.* Men of this type followed the teachings and adopted the attitudes of unbelievers who always rejected individual conversions to the Church in favor of some illusory corporate reunion.

In point of fact, however, as the encyclical shows so well, the status of a person who desires to enter the Church, even when that desire is merely implicit, is objectively a condition of strain or tension. The force of divine charity impels a man to will that he actually become and remain a part or member of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. As long as he remains without that membership, his desire is thus frustrated. In itself, the visible Catholic Church is the kingdom and the city and the household of God Himself. It is the one proper place for those who are the adopted children of God through the life of sanctifying grace. The power of God's command and the force of their own desire push the non-members of the Catholic Church who enjoy the life of sanctifying grace toward union with the Catholic Church and with Our Lord

[18] *AAS*, XXXV, 243.

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by means of the external bonds of unity, the factors which constitute a man as a member of the true and only kingdom of God on earth.

By far the greatest contribution made in the *Mystici Corporis Christi* to the proper understanding of the dogma that no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church is made indirectly, in the basic teaching of the encyclical to the effect that the visible Roman Catholic Church is actually definable as the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. Prior to the issuance of the *Mystici Corporis Christi*, and, unfortunately, even for a short time after it had appeared, there was a tendency on the part of some Catholic popular writers on religious subjects to depict the visible Catholic Church as in some way distinct from and less than the genuine "Body of Christ" spoken of in the epistles of St. Paul. Some of these writers described the Mystical Body as a kind of "invisible Church," and even spoke of affection for the visible Church as something which could detract from and be opposed to love for the true Mystical Body. There were others who, in various ways, refused to the visible Catholic Church the prerogatives and the dignity of the Kingdom of God or the City of God.

In every such case the dogma of the necessity of the true and visible Church of Jesus Christ for the attainment of eternal salvation was obviously and necessarily misinterpreted. In the minds of the men who wrote in this manner, the only social unit which could be described as genuinely necessary for the attainment of man's eternal salvation was represented as something in some way distinct from the society which men know as the Catholic Church. As Catholics, these writers, for the most part, were unwilling to reject the statement that there is no salvation outside the Church. Yet, in line with their position about the existence of an "invisible Church," they tended to explain the dogma away and to reduce it to an empty or vain formula.

The encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* rendered such teaching inexcusable after its appearance when it boldly stated that: "If we would define and describe this true Church of Jesus

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Christ—which is the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church—we shall find no expression more noble, more sublime, or more divine, than the phrase which calls it 'the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.'" [19]

In this statement Pope Pius XII repudiated the one great and basic obstacle to a proper acceptance and understanding of the teaching that there is no salvation to be attained outside the visible Catholic Church. The great truth he enunciated had been contradicted by men who had done, on the ecclesiological level, something like what the heretics of the early Church had done with regard to Our Lord Himself. In those ancient times, the heretics were not at all averse to admitting the existence of God and even the existence of a consubstantial Word of God. They refused, however, to see in a Man who had hung bleeding and dishonored on the Cross of Calvary the Person who is the true and natural Son of God.

So it was that in later years there were individuals who were perfectly willing to admit the existence of a Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. They were definitely not willing, however, to admit that the visible Church in which they came in daily contact, the religious society with bad members intermingled among the good, could actually be this Mystical Body of the Redeemer. Thus, in the light of this fundamental misconception, they could never really appreciate the fact that, in the actual designs of God's providence, this visible society is genuinely necessary for the attainment of man's eternal salvation.

The following points are brought out in the *Mystici Corporis Christi*:

(1) The conditions for being "within" the Church in such a way as to be able to attain salvation in it are not objectively and completely identical with the conditions requisite for membership in this society.

(2) It is possible for a man to attain salvation "within" the Church if he has merely an implicit desire to be in it.

[19] *Ibid.*, 199.

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(3) The condition of a man who is "within" the Church merely by desire is strikingly inferior to that of a man who is actually a member of the true Church.

(4) It is the duty of all members of the Church to work and to pray for the conversion to the Church of all who are not members.

(5) The visible Roman Catholic Church is identical with the social unit designated as the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.

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VII

THE HOLY OFFICE LETTER *SUPREMA HAEC SACRA*

By far the most complete and explicit authoritative statement of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* on the subject of the Church's necessity for salvation is to be found in the letter sent by the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office to His Excellency Archbishop Cushing of Boston. The letter was written as a result of the trouble occasioned by the St. Benedict Center group in Cambridge. The *Suprema haec sacra* was issued on August 8, 1949, but it was not published in full until the fall of 1952. The encyclical letter *Humani generis* was dated August 12, 1950. Thus, while actually composed after the Holy Office letter, it was published two years before the letter.

The Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office asserts, in the letter, that it "is convinced that the unfortunate controversy [which occasioned the action of the Holy Office] arose from the fact that the axiom 'outside the Church there is no salvation' was not correctly understood and weighed, and that the same controversy was rendered more bitter by serious disturbance of discipline arising from the fact that some of the associates of the institutions mentioned above [St. Benedict Center and Boston College] refused reverence and obedience to legitimate authorities."

The doctrinal portion of the letter follows.

Accordingly the Most Eminent and Most Reverend Cardinals of this Supreme Congregation, in a plenary session, held on Wednesday, July 27, 1949, decreed, and the August Pontiff in an audience on the following Thursday, July 28, 1949, deigned to give his approval, that the following explanations pertinent to the doctrine, and also that invitations and exhortations relevant to discipline, be given.

We are bound by divine and Catholic faith to believe all those things which are contained in the word of God, whether it be Scripture or Tradition, and are proposed by the Church to be believed as divinely revealed, not only through solemn judgment

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but also through the ordinary and universal teaching office (*magisterium*).

Now, among those things which the Church has always preached and will never cease to preach there is also contained that infallible statement by which we are taught that there is no salvation outside the Church.

However, this dogma must be understood in the sense in which the Church itself understands it. For Our Saviour gave the things that are contained in the deposit of faith to be explained by the ecclesiastical *magisterium* and not by private judgments.

Now, in the first place, the Church teaches us that in this matter we are dealing with a most strict precept of Jesus Christ. For He explicitly ordered His apostles to teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever He Himself had commanded.

Now, not the least important among the commandments of Christ is that one by which we are commanded to be incorporated by baptism into the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, and to remain united to Christ and to His Vicar, through whom He Himself governs the Church on earth in a visible manner.

Therefore, no one will be saved who, knowing the Church to have been divinely established by Christ, nevertheless refuses to submit to the Church or withholds obedience from the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth.

The Saviour not only gave the precept that all nations should enter the Church, but He also established the Church as a means of salvation, without which no one may be able to enter the kingdom of eternal glory.

In His infinite mercy God has willed that the effects, necessary for one to be saved, of those helps to salvation which are directed towards man's final end, not by intrinsic necessity, but only by divine institution, can also be obtained in certain circumstances when these helps are used only in intention or desire (*ubi voto solummodo vel desiderio adhibeantur*). This we see clearly stated in the Sacred Council of Trent, both with reference to the sacrament of regeneration and with reference to the sacrament of penance.

In its own way, the same thing must be said about the Church, insofar as the Church itself is a general help to salvation. Therefore, in order that one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church *actually* as a member, but it is required that at least he be united to it by intention and desire.

However, this desire need not always be explicit, as it is in catechumens; but, when a person is involved in invincible ignorance, God accepts also an implicit intention (*votum*) which is so called

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because it is included in that good disposition of the soul whereby a person wishes his will to be conformed to the will of God.

These things are clearly taught in that dogmatic letter which was issued by the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, on June 29, 1943, "On the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ." For in this letter the Sovereign Pontiff clearly distinguishes between those who are really (*in re*) incorporated into the Church as members and those who are joined to it only in intention (*in voto*).

Discussing the members of whom the Mystical Body is composed here on earth, the same August Pontiff says: "Only those who have received the laver of regeneration, who profess the true faith, who have not miserably separated themselves from the fabric of the Body or been expelled by legitimate authority by reason of very serious offences, are actually to be counted as members of the Church."

Towards the end of the same encyclical letter, when most affectionately inviting to unity those who do not belong to the body of the Catholic Church (*qui ad Ecclesiae Catholicae compagem non pertinent*), he mentions those who are "ordered to the Redeemer's Mystical Body by a sort of unconscious desire and intention," and these he by no means excludes from eternal salvation, but, on the contrary, asserts that they are in a condition in which "they cannot be secure about their own eternal salvation," since "they still lack so many and such great heavenly helps to salvation that can be enjoyed only in the Catholic Church."

With these wise words he reproves both those who exclude from eternal salvation all those united to the Church only by implicit desire and those who falsely assert that men can be saved equally (*aequaliter*) in every religion.

Nor must we think that any kind of intention of entering the Church is sufficient in order that one may be saved. It is requisite that the intention by which one is ordered to the Church should be informed by perfect charity; and no explicit intention can produce its effect unless the man have supernatural faith: "For he who comes to God must believe that God exists and is a rewarder of those who seek Him." The Council of Trent declares: "Faith is the beginning of man's salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God and attain to the fellowship of His children." [1]

The rest of the letter contains the directions and exhortations spoken of in the first paragraph quoted above. They

[1] The original Latin text and the official English translation of the *Suprema haec sacra* appeared in *AER*, CXXVII, 4 (Oct., 1952), 307-15. The part of the translation quoted above is on pp. 312-14.

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have no immediate bearing on the doctrine of the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation.

This letter, known as the *Suprema haec sacra,* from the first three words of the Latin text, is of unique importance for the study of this section of sacred theology. It is an instruction of the Holy Office, sent out with the approval and at the bidding of the Sovereign Pontiff himself. As such, it is an authoritative, though obviously not an infallible, document. That is to say, the teachings contained in the *Suprema haec sacra* are not to be accepted as infallibly true on the authority of this particular document. Nevertheless, the fact remains that much of its teaching—indeed, what we may call the substance of its teaching—is material which has appeared in previous documents emanating from the Sovereign Pontiff himself and from Oecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church.

The great importance of the *Suprema haec sacra* is based on the fact that this letter sets forth in full explicitness some distinctions and explanations that had been clearly implied and forcefully taught in previous authoritative documents of the teaching Church, but which had never before been set forth in these authoritative pronouncements as explicitly as in the writings of the traditional Catholic theologians. Among these teachings are: (1) the statement that the Catholic Church is necessary for salvation with the necessity of means and with the necessity of precept; (2) the fact that when we describe an individual who is convinced that the Catholic Church has truly been established by Our Lord, and who still obdurately refuses to enter the Church, as being in a condition in which he cannot attain his eternal salvation, we are speaking of the Church's necessity of precept rather than of its necessity of means; (3) the explicit distinction between an explicit and an implicit will to enter the Church; (4) the outright assertion that a person who has merely an implicit will to enter the Church can be saved; and (5) the fact that no will or desire of entering the Church can be effective for the attainment of eternal salvation unless it is

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enlightened by true supernatural faith and animated by perfect charity.

Other teachings of the *Suprema haec sacra*, such as its insistence upon the fact that the doctrine of no salvation outside the true Church is a genuine dogma of the Catholic faith, had been stated explicitly many times in previous pronouncements of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*. Each one of the paragraphs cited above contains invaluable information about what the Church itself really understands and teaches about the dogma of its own necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation. It will be helpful to consider each one of them individually.

(1) The first paragraph we have cited tells of the authoritative character of the letter itself. The Cardinals of the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office decreed that these explanations be given, and the Holy Father approved their decision. We are dealing, then, with an authoritative document. It would be wrong for any teacher of Catholic doctrine to ignore or to contradict the teachings contained in this Holy Office letter.

(2) The next paragraph repeats almost verbatim the statement of the Vatican Council in the third chapter of its dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius*, to the effect that "we are bound by divine and Catholic faith to believe all those things which are contained in the word of God, whether it be Scripture or Tradition, and are proposed by the Church to be believed as divinely revealed, not only through solemn judgment but also through the ordinary and universal teaching office." It is interesting to see, however, that where the *Dei Filius* uses the expression "either by solemn judgment or by the ordinary and universal *magisterium*," the *Suprema haec sacra* says "not only by solemn judgment but also by the ordinary and universal *magisterium*." Its use of the "*non tantum . . . sed etiam*," instead of the "*sive . . . sive*," manifests its conviction that, in dealing with the explanation of the doctrine that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church, it is dealing with a matter which had hitherto been set forth mostly in the ordinary *magisterium* of the Church.

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(3) The previous paragraph had characterized the teaching that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church as a doctrine "which the Church has always preached and will never cease to preach" and as an "infallible statement." This one states clearly that it is a dogma—in other words, one of the teachings which the Church finds in Scripture or in divine apostolic tradition, and which, by either solemn judgment or in its ordinary and universal teaching activity, it presents to the people as something they must believe as a part of divine public revelation. The *Suprema haec sacra,* then, leaves no room for any opinion that this teaching might be something merely connected with the deposit of divine revelation. This truth is a part of the supernatural message communicated by God through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

The Holy Office letter then proceeds to state explicitly and emphatically that the dogma means exactly and only what the Church understands and teaches it to mean. In other words, the people who write to the effect that the viewpoints of men have widened in the course of recent history, and that thus we must seek out some new interpretation of the axiom that there is no salvation outside the Church are quite mistaken in their fundamental approach to the problem. Changing cultural attitudes have nothing whatsoever to do with the accurate and acceptable statement of what is meant by the teaching that there is no salvation outside the Church. Our Lord has not given this truth to men as something to be interpreted and explained freely and more or less generously by private teachers. It is definitely not something to be interpreted or explained in such a way as to make the Church appear more modern or up-to-date. What the people should be taught about this truth is its real and accurate meaning. And the only agency empowered and commissioned to perform this work of interpretation and teaching is the apostolic college, the Roman Pontiff and the Catholic Bishops associated with him to form the doctrinal and jurisdictional hierarchy of the true Church of the New Testament.

In this matter it will be helpful to refer to the section of

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the allocution *Si diligis*, delivered by Pope Pius XII to the members of the hierarchy who were gathered in Rome for the ceremony of the canonization of St. Pius X.

> Christ Our Lord entrusted the truth which He had brought from heaven to the Apostles and, through them, to their successors. He sent His Apostles, as He had been sent by the Father, to teach all nations everything they had heard from Him. The Apostles are, therefore, by divine right the true doctors and teachers of the Church. Besides the lawful successors of the Apostles—namely, the Roman Pontiff for the universal Church and the Bishops for the faithful entrusted to their care—there are no other teachers divinely constituted in the Church of Christ. But both the Bishops and, first of all, the Supreme Teacher and Vicar of Christ on earth, may associate others with themselves in their work of teacher, and use their advice; they delegate to them the faculty to teach, either by special grant, or by conferring an office to which the faculty is attached. Those who are so called teach, not in their own name, nor by reason of their theological knowledge, but by reason of the mandate which they have received from the lawful teaching authority. Their faculty always remains subject to that authority, nor is it ever exercised in its own right or independently.[2]

Over the course of the last few years, particularly, there have been some clever attempts to interpret the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation. The only standard by which these attempts may properly be evaluated is that of the teaching of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* itself. It is this teaching which the *Suprema haec sacra* now begins to present.

An examination of the text of the *Suprema haec sacra* will show us from the very outset that the Holy Office did not intend to set forth anything like an exhaustive explanation of the dogma in its letter. Thus, for example, the document does not go into the nature of the Church or the nature of salvation itself. All that the Cardinals of the Congregation wished to do was to present a correct resolution of the particular point at issue in the controversy which occasioned the writing of the *Suprema haec sacra*.

(4) Thus the letter brings out the fact that the Catholic Church can be said to be necessary for salvation, in one way,

[2] *AER*, CXXXI, 2 (Aug., 1954), 133 f.

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because it is something which Our Lord has commanded, or given a precept, that all men should enter. It is His explicit order, given to us through His apostles, that His precepts should all be observed. Thus a man who teaches that non-members of the true Church should be let alone because, in his opinion, they are already in a position that is satisfactory with reference to Our Lord, is violating Our Lord's precept directly.

(5) The next paragraph is an authoritative statement to the effect that we have a definite and highly important precept from Our Lord "to be incorporated by baptism into the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, and to remain united to Christ and to His Vicar, through whom He Himself governs the Church on earth in a visible manner." It is highly important to understand how this command is contained in the sources of divine public revelation.

St. Matthew's Gospel shows how Our Lord commanded His apostles to teach His message and to administer His sacrament of baptism.

> And Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.
>
> Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.
>
> Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.[3]

The same idea is brought out in the last chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark.

> And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature.
>
> He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned.[4]

Baptism is, of course, the sacrament of entrance into the Church. Such is the force of the baptismal character that, unless it be impeded by public heresy or apostasy, schism, or

[3] *Matt.*, 28: 18-20.

[4] *Mark*, 16: 15-16.

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the full measure of excommunication, it renders the person who possesses it a member of the true Church of Jesus Christ on earth. In issuing the command that His followers administer the sacrament of baptism, Our Lord was, of course, clearly imposing upon those who heard their preaching the obligation to receive this sacrament of regeneration.

The second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles shows that this was the way in which the Apostles themselves understood Our Lord's orders. When, at the end of the sermon by St. Peter on the first Christian Pentecost, his hearers asked the Prince of the Apostles what they should do, he ordered them to do penance and to be baptized.

> Now when they had heard these things, they had compunction in their heart and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles: What shall we do, men and brethren?
>
> But Peter said to them: Do penance: and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.[5]

Thus St. Peter demonstrated in the most practical manner possible that he realized that Our Lord's teaching had contained a command that all men should be baptized and should thus enter the true kingdom of God of the New Testament. Obviously Our Lord's teaching had also contained prohibitions against heresy and schism. The teaching of the *Suprema haec sacra* is thus a statement of traditional Catholic doctrine.

(6) From the fact that the Church is necessary for eternal salvation with the genuine necessity of precept, the Holy Office letter draws the conclusion that "no one will be saved who, knowing the Church to have been divinely established by Christ, nevertheless refuses to submit to the Church or withholds obedience from the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth." It is to be noted that this conclusion is the practical expression of the meaning of the Church's necessity of precept. It very definitely is not, either in itself or in its context in the *Suprema haec sacra*, an expression of the complete and

[5] *Acts*, 2: 37-38.

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ultimate meaning of the dogma of the necessity of the Church for salvation.

(7) The Holy Office letter is the first authoritative document to bring out in full explicitness the teaching that the Church is necessary for salvation both with the necessity of precept and with the necessity of means. A thing is said to be necessary for salvation with the necessity of precept when it has been commanded in such a way that, if a person disobeys this order, he is guilty of mortal sin. A means necessary for salvation, on the other hand, is something which a man must have if he is to attain eternal salvation. This necessity holds even where there is no obdurateness on the part of the individual who does not possess the means. The Catholic Church, the true kingdom of God of the New Testament, is, according to the text of the *Suprema haec sacra*, a reality "without which no one may be able to enter the kingdom of eternal glory." This, and not the statement about persons obstinately refusing to enter the Church when they know that it is the true Church, is the explanation of the Church's necessity of means.

(8) This paragraph brings out two truths about the Church as a necessary means to the attainment of eternal salvation. First, there is the fact that the Church is a means necessary for salvation only by divine institution and not by intrinsic necessity. Second is the fact that means necessary for salvation by divine institution can produce their effects, as the document says, "in certain cases" when there is only a will or desire to possess these things.

(8a) When the document classifies the Catholic Church as a means of salvation which is necessary only by divine institution and not by an intrinsic necessity, it likewise mentions two other realities which are also requisite for the attainment of salvation in this particular way. These are the sacraments of baptism and of penance. Both of these are necessary for salvation, and are necessary as means established by God for the attainment of this end.

In other words, there is no reason apart from the positive

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will of God why a washing with water performed while the person administering the sacrament is uttering a definite formula should be necessary for the attainment of the Beatific Vision. There is no reason apart from the positive will of God why a man who is guilty of mortal sin committed after baptism cannot have this sin forgiven except by means of a judicial absolution pronounced by an authorized priest. Neither the baptism nor the sacrament of penance is by its nature part of the supernatural life itself in the way that sanctifying grace and charity are.

Similarly, it is by the positive will of God that men must be within an organized society if they are to attain the forgiveness of their sins or final blessedness. Faith, hope, and charity are actually *parts* of the supernatural life. It is impossible to have the life of grace in this world, and thus, of course, impossible to pass from this world with the life of grace, apart from faith, hope and charity. The life of the Beatific Vision in heaven necessarily involves charity.

This must be distinctly understood: in any event the men and women who accept the supernatural teaching of God with the act of divine faith, and who love God with the supernatural love of friendship which we call charity, would belong to the kingdom of God on earth. These people would be, in any event, the individuals who subjected themselves to God's supernatural law, and thus would belong to His supernatural kingdom in this world. But, as a matter of fact, God has willed that His supernatural kingdom should be a fully organized society. In His mercy He has decreed that there is no other social unit which can in any way properly be called His kingdom, or His *ecclesia*. If a man is going to belong to God's supernatural kingdom on earth at all, he is thus going to belong in some way to the visible Catholic Church, the religious society over which the Bishop of Rome presides as the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

(8b) The *Suprema haec sacra* then brings out the fact that, in the merciful designs of God's providence, such realities as the Church itself and the sacraments of baptism and penance

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can, under certain circumstances, bring about the effects which they are meant to produce as means necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation when a man possesses them only in the sense that he desires or intends or wills to have or to use them. Obviously the text cannot be understood unless we realize what the "certain circumstances" mentioned in the text really are.

Basic among these circumstances is the genuine impossibility of receiving the sacraments of baptism or of penance or of entering the Church as a member. It is quite clear that if it is possible for a man to be baptized, to go to confession and to receive sacramental absolution, or really to become a member of the true Church, the man for whom this is possible will not attain to eternal salvation unless he actually avails himself of these means. But, on the other hand, should the actual employment of these means be genuinely impossible, then the man can attain to eternal life by a will or desire to employ them.

Here, of course, we must distinguish sedulously between the order of intention and the order of mere velleity. What is required here is an effective desire, an effective act of the will, as distinct from a mere complacency or approval. A non-member of the Church can be saved if he genuinely wants or desires to enter the Church. With that genuine and active desire or intention, he will really become a member of the Church if this is at all possible. If it is not possible, then the force of his intention or desire will bring him "within" the Church in such a way that he can attain eternal salvation in this company. An inherently ineffective act of the will, a mere velleity, will definitely not suffice for the attainment of eternal salvation.

As the text of the *Suprema haec sacra* reminds us toward the end of its doctrinal section, the desire or intention of using the means established by God can be effective for the attainment of eternal salvation only when this act of the will is enlightened by true supernatural divine faith and animated by genuine charity. This, of course, holds true, not only for

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the intention of entering the Church, but also for the desire of the sacraments of baptism and penance—which desire may suffice for the forgiveness of sin when the sacraments themselves are not available.

(9) The expression "a general help to salvation (*generale . . . auxilium salutis*)" applied to the Catholic Church in the text of the Holy Office letter describes the Church as something which, by God's own merciful decree, is a means of salvation meant for and necessary for all men without exception. It is definitely not necessary for salvation only to those who have heard of it. It is not necessary merely for those who seek to live in the higher levels of the spiritual life. It is a means and a help meant for and requisite for all men without exception.

Thus, in the words of the Holy Office document, "in order that one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church actually (*reapse*) as a member, but it is required that he be united to it at least by intention and desire (*voto et desiderio*).

(10) Previous paragraphs of the Holy Office letter had brought out the validity of two distinctions, long contained in the traditional works of Catholic theology, but never before stated so explicitly in an authoritative document of the Holy See. The first was the distinction between the necessity of means and the necessity of precept. The second was the distinction of belonging to the Church *in re* and *in voto*. This second distinction is used, in theology and in the text of the *Suprema haec sacra*, in explaining how the Church is a means genuinely necessary for all men for the attainment of eternal salvation.

The present paragraph explains the distinction between the explicit and the implicit *votum* of entering the true Church, and teaches that even the implicit *votum* can be effective for the attainment of eternal life. It teaches that "this desire [of entering the true Church as a member] need not always be explicit, as it is in catechumens; but, when a person is involved in invincible ignorance, God accepts also an implicit

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intention, which is so called because it is included in that good disposition of the soul whereby a person wishes his will to be conformed to the will of God."

It is to be noted here that, according to the language of the *Suprema haec sacra* and of all the other authoritative documents which have dealt with this matter, the desire of entering the Church does not give a man anything like "a real though incomplete membership in the Church."[6] Those who, like Father St. John, speak in this way, simply fail to take the meaning of the expressions in the Church's documents into consideration. A man who intends or wills to enter the Church is really not a member of it in any way whatsoever. If he were already a member, his desire would be absurd.

The *Suprema haec sacra* describes an explicit desire of entering the Church as something found in catechumens. The catechumen is the adult preparing to enter the true Church of Jesus Christ through the reception of the sacrament of baptism. His desire is said to be explicit because he has a clear and distinct (though not necessarily in any way adequate) knowledge of the society he seeks to enter. In other words, he is a man who knows that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Jesus Christ and who wants to become a member of that Church through the reception of baptism.

On the contrary, a man has only an implicit desire when he wants a thing but does not realize definitely what it is that he desires. The word "implicit" has the sense of something "folded in." When a man desires an objective which cannot be obtained without the attainment of something else, and does not have any clear and distinct awareness of this other thing, he is said to have an implicit desire of this latter.

The *Suprema haec sacra* states explicitly that it is possible for a man to be saved if he has only an implicit desire of entering the Catholic Church. Thus it teaches that a man can attain the Beatific Vision without having had any definite

[6] Cf. Henry St. John, O. P., *Essays in Christian Unity: 1928-1954* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1955), p. 139.

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and explicit knowledge of the Catholic Church during the course of his lifetime in this world.

(11) In this paragraph the Holy Office document cites the passage in the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* dealing with membership in the Church, the genuine supernatural kingdom of God of the New Testament. In this context it is interesting to note that the text of the *Mystici Corporis* does not imply that there is some other sort of real though incomplete membership possessed by persons who do not have the qualifications mentioned here. The encyclical is teaching about those who *actually* (*reapse*) are to be counted as members of the Church. It insists that only these people who have the qualifications mentioned are to be enumerated *reapse* as members. All others, then, simply are not members.

Furthermore, this does not by any means imply that the word "*reapse*" in the text of the *Mystici Corporis* is a mere redundancy. If this were so, words like "genuinely" and "truly" would not be part of any real vocabulary. Moreover, the word "*reapse*" as it is used here connects this teaching of Pope Pius XII with the traditional doctrine of the Catholic theologians who distinguished between belonging to the Church "*in re*," that is, as a member, and belonging to it "*in voto*," that is, by a desire or intention to enter it as a member.

(12) The following paragraph shows that the *Mystici Corporis* had taught very clearly that there is a possibility of salvation for those non-members of the Catholic Church who desire to enter this company with a desire that is merely implicit. In the encyclical, the Holy Father had stated that these people could not be secure about their own eternal salvation, and had given reasons to justify this assertion. Obviously, then, he had unmistakably implied that there really is a possibility of eternal salvation for these individuals.

(13) The *Suprema haec sacra* shows that the text of the *Mystici Corporis*, particularly those sections of the encyclical mentioned in the Holy Office letter, reproves two mutually opposed errors. The first error condemned in the *Mystici Corporis*

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is that according to which a man who has merely an implicit desire of entering the Catholic Church is in a situation in which it is impossible for him to attain to his eternal salvation. The second error proscribed is that which holds that men can be saved *equally* in every religion. Those who taught either error after the publication of *Mystici Corporis* were guilty of ignoring or defying the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, teaching in his ordinary doctrinal activity or *magisterium.*

Most of the translations of the *Suprema haec sacra* render "*aequaliter*" into "equally well." I do not consider these two expressions exactly equivalent in the context of the Holy Office letter. The *Mystici Corporis* teaches by clear implication and the *Suprema haec sacra* teaches quite explicitly that men may be saved only "within" the Catholic Church. They can be "within" this society so as to obtain salvation in it either as members of this organization or as people who seek truly, even if only implicitly, to join it. There is no other religion "within" which men may attain the Beatific Vision. It would be a gross understatement to say that men cannot be saved "equally well" in every religion. The only one within which they can attain their ultimate supernatural end is that of the Catholic Church. Thus, it would seem that the meaning of the Latin "*aequaliter*" in its context in the Holy Office letter, is best expressed in English by the term "equally," rather than by "equally well."

(14) In some ways this last paragraph in the doctrinal section of the letter *Suprema haec sacra* contains its most important contribution to the section of sacred theology that deals with the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation. Here the Holy Office insists that it is a mistake to think "that any kind of intention of entering the Church is sufficient in order that one may be saved." It states that no desire of entering the Church can be effective for the attainment of eternal salvation unless it be animated or informed by perfect charity and enlightened by supernatural faith.

The expression "perfect charity," here in the context of

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the *Suprema haec sacra,* means a genuine and supernatural love of friendship for God based on the awareness of divine faith. It is, in other words, a love of God known as He has told us about Himself in the content of divine public revelation. In the love of charity, as distinct from the merely natural love of God which definitely does not suffice for the attainment of eternal salvation, there is a love of friendship for God known, at least in a confused way, in the Trinity of His Persons.

This charity is distinct from the supernatural affection of hope, in which man loves the Triune God as man's own ultimate Good. It is distinct from the initial love of which the Council of Trent speaks, in that this charity is a love of benevolence and of friendship, founded on a common possession. This common good is the divine nature itself, which is the Godhead, and which is shared by the person who lives the life of sanctifying grace.

The Holy Office letter also teaches that "no implicit intention can produce its effect [of eternal salvation] unless the man has supernatural faith." Here it is imperative to remember that the document speaks of that faith which is defined by the Vatican Council as "the supernatural virtue by which, with the impulse and aid of God's grace, we believe the things He has revealed to be true, not because of their intrinsic truth, seen in the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself revealing, who can neither be deceived nor deceive." This is the faith which the same Vatican Council described as "the beginning of human salvation."

In the text of the *Suprema haec sacra* we are reminded that the need for this supernatural faith holds true even where there is merely an implicit desire to enter the Church. In other words, it is possible to have a man attain salvation when he has no clear-cut notion of the Church, and desires to enter it only insofar as he wills to do all the things God wills that he should do. The desire to enter the Church can be implicit in the desire to please God and to achieve salva-

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tion. But, at the same time, there must be some explicit supernatural truth, actually revealed by God and actually accepted as true on the authority of God revealing, on the part of every man who attains eternal salvation.

When the desire is merely implicit, then a man's faith in the divinely revealed truths about the Church is likewise implicit. The point made here by the Holy Office letter is precisely that there must be some definite and explicit content to any act of genuine supernatural faith. If a man is to be saved, he must accept as true, on the authority of God revealing, the teaching which God has communicated to the world as His public and supernatural message.

The following, then, are the explicit lessons brought out in the text of the *Suprema haec sacra*:

(1) The teaching that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church is a dogma of the Catholic faith.

(2) This dogma has always been taught, and will always be taught, infallibly by the Church's *magisterium*.

(3) The dogma must be understood and explained as the Church's *magisterium* understands and explains it.

(4) The Church is necessary for salvation with both a necessity of precept and a necessity of means.

(5) Because the Church is necessary for salvation with the necessity of precept, any person who knows the Church to have been divinely instituted by Our Lord and yet refuses to enter it or to remain within it cannot attain eternal salvation.

(6) The Church is a general and necessary means for salvation, not by reason of any intrinsic necessity, but only by God's own institution, that is, because God in His merciful wisdom has established it as such.

(7) In order that a man may be saved "within" the Church, it is not always necessary that he belong to the Church *in re*, actually as a member, but it can sometimes be enough that he belong to it as one who desires or wills to be in it. In other words, it is possible for one who belongs to the Church only in desire or *in voto* to be saved.

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(8) It is possible for this desire of entering the Church to be effective, not only when it is explicit, but also (when the person is invincibly ignorant of the true Church) even when that desire or *votum* is merely implicit.

(9) The *Mystici Corporis* reproved both the error of those who teach the impossibility of salvation for those who have only an implicit desire of entering the Church, and the false doctrine of those who claim that men may find salvation equally in every religion.

(10) No desire to enter the Church can be effective for salvation unless it is enlightened by supernatural faith and animated or motivated by perfect charity.

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VIII

THE ENCYCLICAL LETTER *HUMANI GENERIS*

This encyclical, one of the most important doctrinal statements issued in the twentieth century, is dated August 12, 1950. In this letter Pope Pius XII listed and reproved some definite errors in the field of sacred theology. He denounced certain basic misinterpretations about the Church's *magisterium* and about the authority of the Holy Scriptures. Then he listed some false teachings which he described as the "deadly fruit" of these other mistakes. Among these "deadly fruits" he mentions the following:

> Some think that they are not bound by the doctrine set forth a few years ago in Our encyclical letter and based on the sources of revelation, [the doctrine] which teaches that Christ's Mystical Body and the Catholic Roman Church are one and the same. Others reduce the necessity of belonging to the true Church in order to attain to eternal salvation to an empty formula.[1]

In this passage Pope Pius XII put his finger upon the cause and the nature of the defective explanations of the Church's necessity for salvation which had occurred in some popular Catholic writing over the course of the past few decades. In the final analysis, men made mistakes about the necessity of the Church for salvation because they did not realize the paramount fact that the visible society which we know as the Catholic Church is actually the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the true and supernatural kingdom of God on earth, and thus the community within which alone men may achieve salvific union with God in Christ. And likewise, in the last analysis, the mistakes common among some Catholic popularizers in the field of sacred doctrine were made by attempting to show how we could accept the formula "no salvation outside the Church" and, at the same time, explain that formula in such a way as to void it of all real meaning.

[1] The Latin original is in *AER*, CXXIII, 5 (Nov., 1950), 391.

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These errors, in their turn, had stemmed from a false attitude toward the documents of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*. They were, together, "deadly fruits" of a tendency to ignore the clear teachings of the Sovereign Pontiffs, teaching in the course of their ordinary doctrinal activity.

It is important to note that the encyclical *Humani generis* was written about a year after the Holy Office's letter to Archbishop Cushing. In the *Suprema haec sacra* the Holy Office had explained what the Church has always understood and taught about the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Church. It had particularly stressed the fact that it is possible for a man to be "within" the Church in such a manner as to attain eternal salvation even when he had only an implicit desire to enter the Church. Thus it had rebuked those individuals who had tried to explain the dogma in too narrow a fashion.

The *Humani generis*, on the other hand, repudiates the teaching of those who had interpreted the dogma in too broad a sense. It complains that some people "reduce to an empty formula the necessity of belonging to the true Church so as to attain eternal salvation." The terminology employed in this rebuke is highly significant. It so happens that this is the one section of sacred doctrine of which it is true to say that the individuals who try to weaken or to obscure its meaning tend to reduce it to an empty formula.

The Catholic assertion of the truth that there is no salvation outside the true Church is and has always been a point on which the attacks of the Church's enemies have been centered with particular intensity. A claim that the Catholic Church is a highly acceptable religious society, or even that it is by far the best religious organization, would never have aroused any special animosity against the Church. As a matter of fact, claims of this sort have always been made and are still being made by religious societies distinct from the Catholic Church. What the enemies of the Church have always found and still find infuriating is the Catholic insistence on the truth that the Catholic Church is actually the Mystical Body of Jesus

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Christ, the one and only true supernatural kingdom of God on earth, the only social body within which men are to find salvific contact with God through Our Lord.

Hence some Catholic writers on theological subjects, in their anxiety to present the Church in as favorable a light as possible to non-Catholics, have tended to soften or even, for all intents and purposes, to suppress this part of Catholic doctrine. They realize that the very heart or center of the dogma that the Catholic Church is truly the one and only supernatural kingdom of God on earth is to be found in the teaching that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church. Most of them had enough historical learning to know that, during the period of the earliest controversies between Catholic and Protestant writers, the matter of the necessity of the Church for salvation was hardly ever subject to dispute. They recognized that both Catholics and Protestants held that the true Church was necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation. The basic theological question that divided these fifteenth- and sixteenth-century authors was this: Exactly where is the true Church of Jesus Christ, the one and only supernatural kingdom of God on earth, to be found?

Basically the Protestant position was that the true Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, is to be found in this world among the justified or the predestined people, and that only God knows exactly who these individuals really are. The heresiarchs of the Reformation contended that this true Church, the social body outside which no one can be saved, is something invisible to men in this world.

Against the writers who advanced this contention, the controversialists set forth and defended the divinely revealed truth that the true Church, the Mystical Body of Christ is, by God's merciful institution, an organized and hence a visible society, the religious community within which the Bishop of Rome rules as the successor of St. Peter and as the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Their triumphant thesis that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ, God's supernatural kingdom on earth, carried with it the dogma that

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this organized and visible society is the social unit outside which no one at all can attain eternal salvation. To them and to their Protestant adversaries, any denial or weakening of the doctrine that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church would have meant a denial or weakening of the assertion that the Catholic Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, the true Church of the divine promisses.

Now during the last decade of the nineteenth century there appeared among some Catholic writers a tendency and a desire to make the Catholic Church more acceptable to non-Catholics and even to make it appear more respectable to the better educated among the non-members of the Church. In line with this desire, some of them adopted an attitude sharply criticized by Pope Leo XIII in his letter *Testem benevolentiae*. Pope Leo repudiated those who "contend that, to entice the wills of those who differ from us, it is opportune to pass over certain points of doctrine as of lesser importance or to soften them so that they do not keep the same meaning that the Church has constantly held." [2]

This attitude manifested itself most strongly with regard to the dogma of the Church's necessity for eternal salvation, the point of doctrine against which the opponents of the Church tended to react most violently. Thus there were some Catholic publicists who produced statements of the Catholic position in which the dogma of the necessity of the Church for the attainment of salvation was simply ignored. Others, however, wrote and taught in such a way as to weaken this teaching and to explain it in a way inconsistent with the pronouncements on the subject by the ecclesiastical *magisterium*. These were the people who reduced the necessity of the Church for the attainment of salvation to a mere empty formula.

Of course, they had to use a formula, and they usually employed either the Latin expression "*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*," or its English equivalent, "No salvation outside the Church." Since there is hardly another dogma which has been

[2] *Denz.*, 1967.

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so constantly reasserted by the Church's *magisterium*, no Catholic writer could possibly get around the fact that the truth expressed succinctly in this formula was an integral part of Catholic teaching. Most of the men who wrote imperfectly on this subject were at least logical enough not to want to deny some statement which had been set forth explicitly and in an authoritative fashion by the official teachers of the Church. Hence they adopted the expedient of holding the formula itself, and then explaining this formula in such a way as to make it appear to mean quite the opposite of what it says. In their hands the expression "*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" became a mere empty or vain formula, since they presented this statement as signifying, in effect, that there really is salvation outside the Church.

There have been various ways in which Catholic writers have tended to reduce the teaching on the necessity of the Church for salvation to a meaningless formula. Among them, the following may be regarded as among the most important:

(1) A few writers, obviously unschooled in sacred theology, have simply rejected the formula itself, and thus completely denied the teaching. The unfortunate Arnold Harris Mathew, writing during his days as a Catholic, produced teaching of this sort. He makes this statement in the chapter "*Extra Ecclesiam Salus Nulla*," in the symposium *Ecclesia: The Church of Christ*, a work which Mathew himself edited:

> Now the further question arises as to how far Catholics are bound to hold that for those outside the Roman Church there is no salvation. Catholics are not bound to hold anything of the kind.[3]

Akin to Mathew's tactic and almost as crude is the procedure of writers who speak of "the Catholic doctrines concerning salvation 'outside the Church.'" It is obvious that men who teach in this way are denying the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Church. If they choose to pay some lip

[3] Mathew, in his chapter, "Extra Ecclesiam Salus Nulla," in the symposium, *Ecclesia: The Church of Christ*, edited by Arnold Harris Mathew (London: Burns and Oates, 1906), p. 148.

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service to the formula "*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*," that formula, in their hands, becomes vain and meaningless.

(2) The teaching that the dogma of the necessity of the Church for salvation admits of exceptions is, in the last analysis, a denial of the dogma as it has been stated in the authoritative declarations of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* and even as it is expressed in the axiom or formula "*Extra ecclesiasm nulla salus*." It is important to note that such teaching is found in Cardinal Newman's last published study on this subject, a study incorporated into his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, perhaps the least valuable of all his published works. Because of Newman's great influence in the field of contemporary theological studies, it will be helpful to see how he treated this subject in the *Letter*.

Mathew, who held ultimately that Catholics were simply not bound to hold anything like the teaching that no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church, was enthusiastic in his praise of Newman's explanation. He claimed that the Cardinal had "dealt with the question in such a masterly way that it is impossible to improve upon what he says."[4] As a group, the theologians of the Catholic Church have shown no disposition whatsoever to share Mathew's enthusiasm for this section of Newman's teaching.

In his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, Newman dealt with the Church's necessity for salvation, not for its own sake, but only as a teaching that he considered as offering "the opportunity of a legitimate minimizing."[5] Despite the fact that he complained when his theological opponents designated him as a minimizer, he set out to show that the dogmas taught in the Vatican Council's constitution *Pastor aeternus* were subject to legitimate minimizing.[6] He tried to support his contention by appealing to the example of the dogma that there is no

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] In *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), II, 334.

[6] Cf. Fenton, "John Henry Newman and the Vatican Definition of Papal Infallibility," in *AER*, CXIII, 4 (Oct., 1945), 300-20.

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salvation outside the Catholic Church. Hence it was from this angle that he approached the teaching on the necessity of the Church for salvation.

Newman taught that the principle "out of the Church, and out of the faith, is no salvation" admits of exceptions. He believed that what Pope Pius IX had taught in his encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore* indicated the existence of such exceptions.[7] In support of his contention, he quotes the following lines from the encyclical:

> *We and you know*, that those who lie under invincible ignorance as regards our most holy religion, and who, diligently observing the natural law and its precepts, which are engraven by God on the hearts of all, and prepared to obey God, lead a good and upright life, are able, by the operation of the power of divine light and grace, to obtain eternal life.[8]

According to the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, these words of Pope Pius IX conveyed what Newman called "the doctrine of invincible ignorance—or, that it is possible to belong to the soul of the Church without belonging to the body." He concluded his treatment of the dogma with this question: "Who would at first sight gather from the wording of so forcible a universal ["Out of the Church, and out of the faith, is no salvation"], that an exception to its operation, such as this, so distinct, and, for all we know, so very wide, was consistent with holding it?"[9]

If Newman's words mean anything, they assert that the Church holds and proposes as "a dogma, which no Catholic can ever think of disputing," a statement which it contradicts at the very same time. He claims that the doctrine "Out of the Church, and out of the faith, is no salvation" is a dogma of the Church, a truth revealed by God to be held on divine faith by all men. This dogma is set forth as a universal negative proposition, something which is contradicted by a particular affirmative. And Newman taught here that the particular affirmative proposition contradicting this very universal

[7] Cf. Newman, *op. cit.*, 335 f. [8] *Ibid.* [9] *Ibid.*, 336.

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negative dogma is true. He believed that in at least one definite case, which may have a very wide application, there can be salvation outside the faith and outside the Church.

Newman believed that it was "consistent" to hold at the same time that there is no salvation outside the Church and outside the faith. Obviously there could be no more effective way of reducing the teaching on the necessity of the Church for the attainment of eternal salvation to an empty formula than the explanation advanced by Newman in what are probably the least felicitous pages of all his published works. That explanation is certainly one of those reproved in the encyclical letter *Humani generis.*

(3) Some Catholic authors attempted to explain the dogma of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation by saying that the Church is only the ordinary means, and that it is still possible, in extraordinary cases, for a man to attain the Beatific Vision outside the Church. At the same time they resolutely claimed, as Newman had done, that it is a Catholic dogma that there is no salvation outside the Church. Manifestly, according to this explanation, the dogma would be nothing more than a vain formula, something which the very people who accept it as a dogma would be expected to treat, for all practical purposes, as untrue. Ultimately, of course, this explanation coincides with the one offered by Newman in his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk.*

(4) By all means the most important and the most widely employed of all the inadequate explanations of the Church's necessity for salvation was the one that centered around a distinction between the "body" and the "soul" of the Catholic Church. The individual who tried to explain the dogma in this fashion generally designated the visible Church itself as the "body" of the Church and applied the term "soul of the Church" either to grace and the supernatural virtues or to some fancied "invisible Church." Prior to the appearance of the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* there were several books and articles claiming that, while the "soul" of the Church was in some way not separated from the "body," it was actually more extensive than this "body."

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Explanations of the Church's necessity drawn up in terms of this distinction were at best inadequate and confusing and all too frequently infected with serious error. When the expression "soul of the Church" was applied to sanctifying grace and the organism of supernatural virtues that accompany it, the explanation was confusing in that it stressed the fact that a man must be in the state of grace, and that he must have faith and charity if he is to attain to eternal salvation, but it tended to obscure the truth that a man must in some manner be "within" the true and visible Catholic Church at the moment of his death if he is ever to reach the Beatific Vision.

When, on the other hand, some imaginary "invisible Church," some assembly of all the good people in the world, was designated as the "soul of the Church," these explanations lapsed into doctrinal inaccuracy. The great paramount mystery of the Church is to be found in the fact that the visible and organized religious society over which the Bishop of Rome presides as the Vicar of Christ and the Successor of St. Peter is the true and only *ecclesia* of the New Testament. This society, and this alone, is the true kingdom of God on earth, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. It holds within its membership both good men and bad. It includes those who are truly appreciative of their membership and those who are not. Nevertheless, in the mysterious and merciful designs of God's providence, this community and no other is the social entity within which men are to find salvific contact with God in Christ.

(5) There were many other inadequate explanations of this dogma current before the appearance of the *Mystici Corporis* and of the *Suprema haec sacra*. Some writers tried to restrict the meaning of the Church's necessity for salvation to the fact that the gifts of grace whereby a man actually achieves salvation really belong to the Church. Others tried to make it appear that the visible Church itself was necessary for salvation only with the necessity of precept. Still others represented the attainment of salvation within the true Church

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as the "ideal" willed by God, but imagined that this salvation could be obtained elsewhere and otherwise in special circumstances.

The only method by which the dogma can be explained satisfactorily is that employed in the *Suprema haec sacra.* The Holy Office letter merely restates, in more detailed form, exactly what all of the declarations of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* have taught about the meaning of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation. Whatever progress there will be in the explanation of this dogma will come and must come along the line laid down in this Holy Office letter. Such is the teaching of the encyclical letter *Humani generis.*

The *Humani generis* is certainly one of the most important documents issued by the Holy See during the course of the twentieth century. The perspective of years will be needed for a proper appreciation of the beneficial effects it has brought into the teaching of sacred theology. Yet even today we can see clearly that one of its finest and most valuable lessons was contained in its brief reference to the dogma that the Catholic Church is really necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation.

It repudiated and condemned the practice, which, incidentally, had been all too frequent, of reducing this doctrine to an empty or vain formula. Actually this section of sacred theology or of Catholic doctrine was one in which inadequate or inaccurate teaching had precisely the effect of representing a part of Catholic teaching as mere meaningless verbiage. Almost every Catholic writer who touched in any way upon this subject began in some way with a consideration of and an assent to a definite formula: "No salvation outside the Church." Most of the men who taught this subject in an incorrect or faulty manner managed, in the last analysis, to give the impression that, although Catholics are bound in conscience to accept this formula as true, it really means little or nothing.

That doctrinal tactic was and is completely erroneous. Moreover, it had and it could only have the most absolutely

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disastrous effects upon the people who were misled by it. These people were influenced to believe that a dogma of the Catholic Church, a teaching which the Church presents as a divinely revealed truth which all men are obliged to accept with the assent of divine faith, was, in the last analysis, something practically devoid of meaning. They were encouraged to imagine that a dogma which the Church's *magisterium* had, in ages past, set forth as a part of divine public revelation, turned out, on further analysis, to be an empty set of words, which modern intellectual Catholics could accept only when they had been voided of the meaning they were manifestly meant to convey. Not to put too fine a point on it, the people who were encouraged to accept the faulty teachings repudiated in the *Humani generis* were put in a position to fancy that the Church was something less than sincere when it still insisted upon the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Church.

And, if a man could be deluded into imagining that the formulae employed by organs of the *magisterium* like the Fourth Lateran Council and the *Cantate Domino* to teach about the necessity of the Church did not mean what they said, he could just as easily be influenced to imagine that any other definition of the teaching Church was likewise devoid of any real significance. The worst doctrinal tendencies of our time found their expression in the heresy of Modernism, and it was a basic tenet of the Modernists that the declarations of the ecclesiastical *magisterium* are to be accepted only when they are interpreted to mean something different from what the Church originally and constantly taught that they mean.

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PART II

THE THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DOGMA

Until now we have been considering what various documents of the Church's *magisterium* have said about the necessity of the Catholic Church for the attainment of eternal salvation. We have found that the teaching according to which there is no salvation outside the Church is a dogma, a truth revealed by God and presented as such by the *ecclesia docens*. We have seen also that the Holy See rejects and forbids any attempted explanation of this dogma which would represent the statement that there is no salvation outside the Church as an empty formula.

The Holy Office letter *Suprema haec sacra*, asserting explicitly and in detail the truths which have been taught in a more general way in other authoritative documents of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*, has assured us that the Church is necessary for the attainment of eternal life in two distinct ways, with the necessity of precept and with the necessity of means. By God's own positive institution, the visible religious society over which the Roman Pontiff rules as Christ's Vicar on earth is a necessary means for the attainment of the Beatific Vision, in the sense that a person must be "within" this society at the moment of his death, either as a member or as one who explicitly or implicitly desires to become a member, if he is to be saved forever.

Furthermore the *Suprema haec sacra* has shown us that no one can be "within" the Church even by implicit desire or intention in such a way as to attain the life of grace in it unless he has true supernatural faith and unless he loves God and his neighbor with the genuine and supernatural affection of divine charity.

It is clearly the function of sacred theology to set forth and to analyze the teachings of the *magisterium* on the subject

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it proposes to investigate. Just as clearly, however, this is not the complete work of theology. As Pope Pius XII has reminded us in his encyclical *Humani generis*, "Pius IX, teaching that the noblest function of theology is to show how a doctrine defined by the Church is contained in the sources of revelation, added these words, and with very good reason: 'in that sense in which it has been defined by the Church.'" [1]

To attempt anything like a full performance of this noblest work of sacred theology with reference to the Catholic teaching about the Church's necessity for the attainment of salvation would require a literary production of great size. Such an attempt lies far outside the purpose of this little book. But, even in a volume as small as this, it is necessary to investigate, however briefly, what Sacred Scripture has to say about the nature of salvation itself and about the constitution of the true Church of Jesus Christ according to the dispensation of the New Testament. And, in the light of that teaching, we shall be able to see with a clarity otherwise unattainable, the true and basic meaning of the dogma about the necessity of the Church for salvation.

Furthermore, in order to have a useful presentation of the theological background of our subject, we must take some cognizance of the accidents in the history of Catholic theology which have affected the treatise on the Church as a whole and the teaching on the necessity of the Church in particular. What we may call the scholastic treatise on the Church developed later than most of the other great sections of dogmatic theology. And, unlike most of the other sections of scholastic theology, the *tractatus de ecclesia* was influenced in its ordering and in its very content by the controversy against the early Protestant heresiarchs. It was in great measure due to these historical accidents that certain well known, influential, and fundamentally inadequate explanations of the Church's necessity for salvation arose and developed.

In this second part I shall attempt to show something of this theological background of our thesis.

[1] *AER*, CXXIII, 5 (Nov., 1950), 390.

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I

THE CONCEPT OF SALVATION

The concept of eternal salvation runs throughout the entire New Testament. It is one of the basic notions in the teaching which Our Lord preached as the divine message He had received from His Father. He described Himself as coming to save what was lost. "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." [1] Christ is Our Saviour. His work is preeminently that of our salvation.

Now, the term "to save," employed in sacred theology and in the English translations of the New Testament as the equivalent of the Latin "salvare" and of the Greek "σώζειν," designates the process by which a person is removed from a condition in which he is destined for ruin or death and is transferred to a condition in which he may live and prosper. Basically, that is the meaning expressed by the expression "saving someone," employed in ordinary terminology. Thus, years ago, when we frequently read in the newspapers about the feats of the then young first officer of the steamship *America* (later Commodore Harry Manning) in saving the lives of the crews of several fishing boats that had been swamped in Atlantic storms, we all understood that this man and the mariners under his command had taken the victims off the wrecked boats to which they were clinging and had brought them to the safety of the ocean liner to which he was assigned.

The men were saved, in the sense that they were transferred from positions in which they would inevitably have drowned very soon into the security of the liner, and eventually to the shores of their own countries. Men who were transferred at sea from one seaworthy vessel to another could never have been described as "saved."

The salvation of men, described in divine public revelation,

[1] *Matt.*, 18: 11; see also *Luke*, 19: 10.

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is a salvation in the strict or proper sense of the term. It is a process by which men are removed from a condition or status which would involve them in everlasting death if they remained within it, to a condition in which they may enjoy eternal life and happiness.

It is highly important to understand that this process is quite complex. The *terminus a quo*, the undesirable condition, from which men are removed in the process of salvation is basically sin, the status of aversion from almighty God. A man is said to be saved, absolutely and simply, when he is taken out of the condition of original or mortal sin and brought into the status of the eternal and supernatural life of grace. Ultimately that process is achieved and perfected when the person saved comes to possess the life of grace eternally and inamissibly, in the everlasting glory of the Beatific Vision. There is genuine salvation, however, when the man who has hitherto been in the state of original or mortal sin is brought into the life of sanctifying grace, even in this world, when that life of grace can be lost through the man's own fault.

There is, however, a definitely social aspect to the process of salvation. In the merciful designs of God's providence, the man who is transferred from the state of original or mortal sin into the state of grace is brought in some way "within" a social unit, the supernatural kingdom of the living God. In heaven that community is the Church triumphant, the company of the elect enjoying the Beatific Vision. On earth it is the Church militant. Under the conditions of the new or the Christian dispensation, that community is the organized or visible religious society which is the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ on earth.

We must not lose sight of the fact that people in the condition of aversion from God, in the state of original or mortal sin, belong in some way to a kingdom or an *ecclesia* under the leadership of Satan, the moving spirit among the spiritual enemies of God. Hence the process of salvation involves necessarily the transfer of an individual from one social unit

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or community to another, from the kingdom of Satan to the true and supernatural kingdom of the living God.

The opening paragraphs of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical against Freemasonry, the letter *Humanum genus*, brings out the relations between these two communities with unmatched clarity and accuracy.

> The race of man, after its miserable fall from God, the Creator and the Giver of heavenly gifts, " through the envy of the devil," separated into two diverse parts, of which the one steadfastly contends for truth and virtue, the other for those things which are contrary to virtue and to truth. The one is the kingdom of God on earth, the true Church of Jesus Christ; and those who desire from their heart to be united with it so as to gain salvation must of necessity serve God and His only-begotten Son with their whole mind and with an entire will. The other is the kingdom of Satan, in whose possession and control are all whosoever follow the fatal example of their leader and of our first parents, those who refuse to obey the divine and eternal law, and who have many aims of their own in contempt of God, and many aims also against God.
>
> This twofold kingdom St. Augustine keenly discerned and described after the manner of two cities, contrary in their laws because striving for contrary objects; and with subtle brevity he expressed the efficient cause of each in these words: " Two loves formed two cities: the love of self, reaching even to contempt of God, an earthly city; and the love of God, reaching even to contempt of self, a heavenly one." At every period of time each has been in conflict with the other, with a variety and multiplicity of weapons and of warfare, although not always with equal ardor and assault.[2]

This intrinsically social aspect of salvation is brought out in the account, in the Acts of the Apostles, of the end of St. Peter's sermon on the first Christian Pentecost and of the results of that sermon.

> Now when they had heard these things, they had compunction in their heart and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles: What shall we do, men and brethren?
>
> But Peter said to them: Do penance: and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

[2] This passage is found in Father Wynne's edition of *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1903), p. 83.

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For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, whomsoever the Lord our God shall call.

And with very many other words did he testify and exhort them, saying: Save yourselves from this perverse generation.

They therefore that received his word were baptized: and there were added in that day about three thousand souls.

And they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers.[3]

According to the inspired word of God in the Acts of the Apostles, St. Peter exhorted the men who listened to him on that first Christian Pentecost to "save themselves from this perverse generation." Furthermore, we are told that the individuals who "received his word" received the sacrament of baptism, and that they were "added" to the number of the disciples of Christ who had been with St. Peter and the other apostles before he delivered his sermon. The society of the disciples of Jesus Christ, the organization which we know now as the Catholic Church, continued, with this great number of new members, to do exactly what it had been doing since the day of Our Lord's ascension into heaven.

We read that the group, composed as it was of these new converts who had come into the Church as a result of St. Peter's Pentecost sermon and of the disciples who had entered the group during Our Lord's public life, was "persevering in the doctrine of the apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers." And we read the same sort of account of the activity of the original band of disciples that returned to Jerusalem immediately after the Ascension.

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount that is called Olivet, which is nigh Jerusalem, within a sabbath day's journey.

And when they were come in they went up into an upper room, where abode Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alpheus and Simon Zelotes and Jude the brother of James.

All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.[4]

Both the text and the context of the Acts of the Apostles

[3] *Acts*, 2: 37-42.

[4] *Acts*, 1, 12-14.

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assure us that the people who heeded St. Peter's injunction to save themselves from this perverse generation entered the true Church of God, the kingdom of God on earth. They entered the Catholic Church.

Now, if St. Peter's words on this occasion meant anything at all, they signified that the individuals to whom he was speaking were in a situation which would lead them to eternal ruin if they continued in it. They were described as belonging to a "perverse generation." They were told to save themselves by getting out of it. The institution into which they would enter by the very fact of leaving "this perverse generation" was none other than the society of Our Lord's disciples, the Catholic Church itself.

The clear implication of St. Peter's statement is that the Church, the kingdom of God, was the only institution or social unit of salvation. Not to be within this society was to be in the perverse generation within which a man was faced with eternal and entire spiritual ruin. To leave the perverse generation was to enter the Church.

In other words, the clear teaching of this section of the Acts of the Apostles is precisely that given by Pope Leo XIII in the opening passages of his encyclical *Humanum genus.* The central point of this teaching is that the entire human race is divided between the kingdom of God, the *ecclesia,* and the kingdom of Satan. To be saved from the kingdom of Satan is to enter the kingdom of God. In this context it is not difficult to see how, by God's institution, the Catholic Church, the one and only supernatural kingdom of God on earth, is presented as a necessary means for the attainment of salvation. By God's institution the process of salvation itself involves a passage from the kingdom of Satan into the *ecclesia.*

Now, for the proper understanding of this doctrine, especially in view of the teaching on this subject contained in some recent books and articles, it is imperative to understand the religious condition of the people to whom St. Peter delivered his sermon on that first Christian Pentecost. Again, the Acts of the Apostles contains essentially important information.

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This book describes them in general with the statement that "there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven." The homelands of these men are enumerated in the statement attributed to the multitude itself.

> And they were all amazed and wondered, saying: Behold, are not all these that speak, Galileans?
>
> And how have we heard, every man, our own tongue wherein we were born?
>
> Parthians and Medes and Elamites and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
>
> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome,
>
> Jews also and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians: we have heard them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.[5]

According to the text of the Acts, a great many of these people were pilgrims, men and women who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the great Jewish feast of Pentecost. Our Lord had died on the Cross only a little over seven weeks before St. Peter delivered that sermon, and many of the people who listened to St. Peter must have been on their way to Jerusalem at the very time Our Lord died. They had begun their pilgrimage as an act of worship in the Jewish religion at the very time when the Jewish religion was the one approved especially by God and when the Jewish politico-religious commonwealth was actually the supernatural kingdom of God on earth, the *ecclesia* of the Old Testament.

These people as individuals probably had nothing whatsoever to do with the persecution and the murder of the Incarnate Word of God. They had started on their journey as members of God's chosen people, the people of His covenant. Their journey to Jerusalem was made precisely in order to worship and honor God. They were truly devout individuals.

Yet, seven weeks before, the religious body to which they belonged had ceased to be God's *ecclesia*. The Jewish politico-religious social unit had definitively rejected Our Lord, the

[5] *Acts*, 2: 7-11.

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Messias promised in the Old Testament. This company had hitherto enjoyed its position as God's *ecclesia* or His *congregatio fidelium* by virtue of the fact that it had accepted and professed its acceptance of the divine message about the promised Redeemer. In rejecting the Redeemer Himself, this social unit had automatically rejected the teaching God had given about Him. The rejection of this message constituted an abandonment of the divine faith itself. By manifesting this rejection of the faith, the Jewish religious unit fell from its position as the company of the chosen people. It was no longer God's *ecclesia*, His supernatural kingdom on earth. It became part of the kingdom of Satan.

While the great Jewish social unit was rejecting Our Lord and thus repudiating its acceptance of the divinely revealed message about Him, the little company of the disciples, organized by Our Lord around Himself, retained its faith. It continued to accept and to obey Our Lord and to believe the divinely revealed message that centered around Him. Thus, at the moment of Our Lord's death on Calvary, the moment when the old dispensation was ended and the Jewish religious association ceased to be the supernatural kingdom of God on earth, this recently organized society of Our Lord's disciples began to exist as the *ecclesia* or the kingdom.

This society was the true continuation of Israel. The men who were within it were the true sons of Abraham, in that they had the genuine faith of Abraham. This society was the new association of the chosen people. Its members were, as St. Paul called them, the elect or the chosen of God.

It must be understood, incidentally, that this society was actually God's supernatural kingdom on earth in a much more complete and perfect sense than the old Jewish commonwealth had ever been. The old Israel had constituted the people of the covenant. According to God's unfailing promise, the Redeemer was to be born within that company. Yet conditions had never been such that a man had to be within this company in order to attain to eternal salvation.

On the contrary, the new and faithful Israel was completely

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identical with the supernatural kingdom of God on earth. It was the true *ecclesia* or company of the faithful in the sense that no man could attain to eternal salvation unless he passed from this life "within" it. This organized society, within which unworthy members would be intermingled with the good until the end of time, was actually Our Lord's own Mystical Body.

So it was that when St. Peter spoke to the crowd on the first Christian Pentecost, the society of which he had been constituted the visible head was actually the *ecclesia Dei*, the necessary terminus of the process of salvation. His hearers who, a few weeks before, had belonged to God's supernatural kingdom on earth by reason of their membership in the old Israelitic commonwealth, now actually found themselves in the "perverse generation" precisely by reason of that same membership. When St. Peter first spoke to them, they were in a position from which they needed to be saved. They were no longer members of the chosen people.

By heeding and obeying the words of St. Peter they regained the position they had formerly possessed, and their new possession of the dignity of membership in the *ecclesia* was much more perfect and complete than that which they had formerly enjoyed. Previously they had been within a company which had been God's *congregatio fidelium* by reason of the profession of its acceptance of the divine message that centered around the promise of a Redeemer. When they accepted St. Peter's teaching, performed their duty of penance, and, by their reception of the sacrament of baptism, were "added" to the society of Our Lord's disciples, they entered the supernatural kingdom of God which enjoyed its status by reason of its acceptance of the divinely revealed teaching about the Redeemer who had become incarnate and had died to reconcile them with God.

It is extremely important for us to remember, however, that the people St. Peter urged to save themselves from the perverse generation in which they were living at the time were definitely not men of no religion at all. They were devout members

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of the establishment which had been, less than eight weeks before, God's supernatural kingdom on earth. In that establishment they had learned love for God and zeal in His service. Many of them were so moved by zeal for the service of God that they were willing to travel very considerable distances and to undergo serious hardships in order to assist at the temple sacrifices in Jerusalem during the days of the great religious festivity of Pentecost.

St. Peter did not recommend the Church to these people merely as something far more perfect than the religious affiliation they already possessed. He did not in any sense imply that, in entering the *ecclesia*, they would be simply passing to a better religious community. Quite on the contrary, he made it clear that it was necessary for them to transfer themselves from the "perverse generation" in which they then existed to a condition of salvation. The acceptance of his teaching was in fact an entrance into the Church. It is in line with this teaching that St. Paul, in his epistles, refers to those within the Church as "saved." The Epistle to the Ephesians tells us that God, "even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved)." [6] And it explains that "by grace you are saved through faith: and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God." [7] The entire context of the New Testament brings out the fact that by entering the Church, men are actually being saved from the dominion of Satan, the prince of this world.

This is the basic social aspect of the process of salvation. In that process there is always involved a passage or a *transitus* from the kingdom of God's spiritual enemy into the actual kingdom of God Himself, His *ecclesia*. St. Peter made it clear that, in entering the Church, the people to whom he was speaking on that first Christian Pentecost were really being saved.

We must not lose sight of the fact that in our own day there is sometimes a tendency to imagine that persons who are in a position comparable with that of the people to whom St.

[6] *Eph.*, 2: 5. [7] *Eph.*, 2: 8.

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Peter's sermon was addressed are really in an acceptable position. The people who encourage this tendency are careful to state that the Catholic Church is more advantageously placed than other religious bodies in this world. They assert that the Church has the fullness of God's revealed message; but, at the same time, they likewise insist that other religions are really from God, and that they constitute the plenitude of God's teaching for those whom He does not call to the higher position of Catholicism. The Modernist Von Hügel brought out this teaching in a volume recently republished in this country. According to Von Hügel

> The Jewish religion was not false for the thirteen centuries of the pre-Christian operations; it was, for those times, God's fullest self-revelation and man's deepest apprehension of God; and this same Jewish religion can be, *is*, still the fullest religious truth for numerous individuals whom God leaves in their good faith; in their not directly requiring the fuller, the fullest, light and aid to Christianity. What is specially true of the Jewish religion is, in a lesser but still very real degree, true of Mohammedanism, and even of Hinduism, of Parseeism, etc.[8]

Von Hügel, like others of his class, was careful to insist that "it is *not* true that all religions are equally true, equally pure, equally fruitful." But, as a matter of fact, no one but the most militant and ignorant atheist ever claimed that they were. His own position is completely incompatible with the teaching of St. Peter in his sermon on the first Christian Pentecost. He depicted non-Catholic religions as acceptable, even though less perfect than Catholicism. If his contention had been in any way true, then St. Peter would have been guilty of seriously deceiving the people to whom he spoke on that Pentecost morning. Very definitely it is not true to say that a man is saved when he is transferred from a less perfect to a more perfect condition. He is saved only by being transferred from a ruinous position into a status wherein he can live as he should.

Von Hügel described the religious condition of the people

[8] *Letters from Baron Friedrich Von Hügel to a Niece* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), p. 115.

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to whom St. Peter spoke as "still the fullest religious truth for numerous individuals whom God leaves in their good faith; in their not directly requiring the fuller, the fullest, light and aid to Christianity." St. Peter asserted that these individuals were in a perverse generation, and told them to save themselves from it. There is no possibility of any agreement between these two positions.

In every age of the Church there has been one portion of Christian doctrine which men have been especially tempted to misconstrue or to deny. In our own times it is the part of Catholic truth which was brought out with special force and clarity by St. Peter in his first missionary sermon in Jerusalem. It is somewhat unfashionable today to insist, as St. Peter did, that those who are outside the true Church of Jesus Christ stand in need of being saved by leaving their own positions and entering the *ecclesia*. Nevertheless, this remains a part of God's own revealed message.

It is a part of Catholic doctrine that entrance into the Church (actually by becoming a member of the Church; and, when this is impossible, by at least an implicit though sincere desire or intention) is a part of the process of salvation. It is equally a part of Catholic teaching, however, that this is by no means the only part. A man is saved from the evil of belonging to the kingdom of Satan by his entrance into the Church, but this entrance in no way constitutes a guarantee that he will actually enjoy the Beatific Vision for all eternity. The process of salvation is not fully completed, a man cannot be said to be "saved" in the full sense of the term, until he has attained the Beatific Vision itself.

St. James, writing to men who are already Christians, members of the true Church, warns them to "receive the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls." [9] He was setting forth God's own teaching when he reminded those within the Church that they were still obliged to work, under the direction of the divine doctrine, for the salvation of their own souls. It remains possible for a man to be within the Church and to be disloyal to God. Such a man constitutes himself as an unworthy

[9] *James*, 1: 21.

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member of the Church and, unless he repents of his sins, he will be cut away from the kingdom of God for all eternity when he dies. And, if the sinner within the Church turns again toward God, he is being saved by the power of Jesus Christ, working through the sacrament of penance. Obviously he cannot be saved other than in and through the Catholic Church.

Thus, despite the fact that it is possible for a man to be within the Church and to lose his soul, salvation is in itself a process which involves a social aspect. Everyone who has been born since the sin of Adam, with the exception of Our Lord and of His Blessed Mother, has come into the world or begun his existence as a member of the fallen family of Adam, and thus as one who belongs to what St. Peter designated as the "perverse generation" and what Pope Leo XIII called the "kingdom of Satan."

He has likewise begun his existence as a human being in the state of original sin and has very frequently increased his aversion from God by the force of his own mortal sins. The process of salvation is the process by which such men have been brought from that condition of aversion from God into the final and inamissible possession of His friendship and the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision. Involved in that process, by God's own institution, is a transfer from the kingdom of Satan into the one supernatural kingdom of God on earth. Since the moment of Our Lord's death on the Cross, that kingdom has been, again by God's own institution, the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ on earth.

Thus, if we examine the actual concept of salvation, we find that the Church as God's kingdom on earth is actually involved in it. Thus, in this process, the Church is not merely an extraneous factor which has been somehow introduced into the Christian teaching about eternal salvation. It is, in the social aspect of salvation, the necessary *terminus ad quem* of that transfer by which men are brought from sin to grace, by being changed from a position of belonging to the kingdom of Satan, the dominion of "the prince of this world," into the one and only supernatural kingdom of God on earth.

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II

SALVATION AND THE BASIC CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

In the previous chapter we studied what God's revealed message has to say about the nature of salvation. We found that this concept, as God Himself has described it, is that of a transfer, effected by the grace God gives men by reason of Our Lord's sacrificial death, from the state of spiritual death to that of the spiritual life of sanctifying grace. We saw that ultimately it terminates in the everlasting possession of the life of grace in heaven.

It was likewise apparent, however, that, in the divine message, salvation is depicted as something which has a social as well as an individual aspect. It is not only a passage from the state of sin to the life of grace in its everlasting perfection: it is also, and essentially, a *transitus* from the social unit described as the kingdom of Satan into the true and supernatural kingdom of God.

The social unit properly called the true and supernatural kingdom of God lives at home, in its proper and everlasting environment, only in the glory of heaven. It also lives, in a transitory and preparatory status, in this world. It is an essential part of the divinely revealed teaching about salvation that no one enters into the Church triumphant, the kingdom of God in heaven, unless he has departed this life "within" the kingdom of God on earth. In the dispensation of the New Testament, which will endure until the end of time, the Roman Catholic Church is completely identified with the supernatural kingdom of God on earth. Hence no one will attain the Beatific Vision unless he dies "within" the Catholic Church.

This lesson is one element of the basic theological proof of the necessity of the Catholic Church for the attainment of eternal salvation. The other element is obviously to be based on an examination of the way in which the Church itself is

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described as God's kingdom in the content of divine public revelation. This is the business of the present chapter.

An adequate examination of what God's revealed message tells us about the Catholic Church in its capacity as His supernatural kingdom in this world will show clearly that this society has been instituted by God Himself as the social unit which one must enter and "within" which one must die if he is to attain to the Beatific Vision. But, if this objective is to be achieved, the examination must be truly adequate. All of the elements of the description of the Church given in the deposit of the divine public revelation must be taken into account.

It would be highly imprudent and unrealistic, incidentally, to take it for granted that all educated Catholics have an explicit cognizance of all the elements which enter into the concept of the Church contained in God's supernatural revealed message. There has been, as the result of events definitely ascertainable in the history of sacred theology, a kind of impoverishment of the notion of the *ecclesia* in recent theological literature and in the popular Catholic mind. The net effect of this impoverishment has been a tendency to envision some of the real components of the notion of God's supernatural kingdom on earth in an obscure and imperfect manner.

A somewhat crude but genuinely enlightening index of this impoverishment can be found in the average Catholic's explanation of the statement: "The Roman Catholic Church is the true Church of Jesus Christ."

This sentence is a truth, a dogma of the Catholic faith. It contains within itself the plenitude of divinely revealed truth about the status and the dignity of the religious society over which the Bishop of Rome presides. Yet when most Catholics are asked what it means, they seem to restrict themselves to the facts that this is the one Church actually established by Our Lord, and the one society of which He is the Head. Actually there are other elements essential to an adequate concept of "the true Church of Jesus Christ" or "God's supernatural kingdom."

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Older ecclesiologists, like the Dominican Cardinal John de Turrecremata, brought out all the elements included in the revealed description of the true Church when they explained the various names applied to this company and to its members in Scripture and in tradition. Thus they showed what God had told us about the Church when the term ἐκκλησία, the Greek name of which the English "Church" is the translation, was applied to it. They likewise pointed out what was taught about the nature of this society by reason of the fact that it was indicated as the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Father, as Christ's own kingdom, as the city of God and as the household of the faith. They showed that what is contained under the metaphorical names of the temple of God and the Body of Christ is rightly applied to the Catholic Church. Furthermore, they brought out the connotations of the titles of "the called," "the chosen," and "the disciples," applied to the members of the Church.[1]

When all of these names and titles had been explained, the Church was clearly shown to be the social unit outside which no one at all can be saved. The divine message summed up under these various designations made it completely evident that, by reason of God's own institution, there is no salvation whatsoever to be attained outside the visible Catholic Church. It has been most unfortunate that contemporary ecclesiology has failed to give explicit and clear consideration to the content of all these names of the Church and of its members.

Thus, in our own time, we have become accustomed to think of the word "Church" as properly applicable to any religious society, or at least to any religious society which claims to be composed of followers of Our Lord. In the writings of men like Turrecremata, on the other hand, the point is made that the Greek word "ἐκκλησία" (Latinized as *ecclesia*) is used in Sacred Scripture, and particularly in the

[1] For a brief explanation of these titles, see Fenton, "New Testament Designations of the Catholic Church and Its Members," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (Jan.-April, 1947), 127-46; 275-306.

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New Testament, to designate the chosen people of God, the society of the covenant. It was the name given at the time of Our Lord's public ministry to the people of Israel considered precisely as the people of God. Hence, in point of fact, the name "Church" is properly applicable now only to the chosen people of the New Testament, to the religious society over which the Bishop of Rome presides as the supreme visible head. This is the community within which God Himself is the supreme Ruler and Teacher.[2] It is the company within which alone the authorized sacrifice of the New Testament is offered.

The supernatural kingdom of God is the company of men and women who profess to accept the divine law by which God directs us to the attainment of the Beatific Vision. God, of course, is the supreme Ruler of the universe. Thus, in a sense, the entire created universe, with all the rational and non-rational creatures within it, may be said to constitute His kingdom. Properly speaking, however, the term "kingdom of God" is applied to a social unit within which God Himself is the Supreme Lawgiver.

Understood in this proper sense, the kingdom is the social unit of men and women who subject themselves to the direction God gives them so as to bring them to the attainment of their one ultimate and eternal end. Now, the only ultimate and everlasting happiness available to men, as a matter of fact, is to be found in the possession of the Triune God in the clarity of the Beatific Vision. The law which directs men to the attainment of this ultimate end must be something supernatural, since the end itself is supernatural. Because that law is supernatural, it is definitely not something which men can observe through the use of their merely natural faculties of knowledge. It is something which can be known only through the process of divine revelation here on earth.

Hence the people who make up the kingdom of God on earth are those who accept as certain, on the authority of

[2] Cf. Fenton, "The Meaning of the Name 'Church,'" in *AER*, CXXXI, 4 (Oct., 1954), 268-76.

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God Himself revealing, the message in which God's supernatural law is incorporated. They are the congregation of the faithful or of the believers. The social unit to which these people have belonged has always been the one and true *ecclesia.*

This supernatural kingdom of God on earth passed through various stages during the Old Testament times. At the time of the Incarnation, it was practically or nearly identical with the Israelitic religious commonwealth. This situation continued until the moment of Our Lord's death on the Cross.

At that moment, the old Israelitic commonwealth, the Jewish nation, definitely rejected Our Lord and His teaching. By the force of that rejection, it automatically and completely lost its status as the congregation of the faithful. It was no longer the kingdom of God on earth, God's *ecclesia.*

But, at that same moment, the society of the disciples which Our Lord had gathered and organized around Himself during the course of His public life on earth began to exist as the true *ecclesia.* This new society, which Our Lord had originally formed within the fabric of the old Jewish community, became completely identified with the supernatural kingdom of God on earth. It thus began to possess a perfection which the older community had never enjoyed. It was the true Israel, the Israel of God. Its people were the people of the new covenant. It was, and it will remain until the end of time, the one congregation of the faithful in this world.

According to Our Lord's own teaching, however, the true supernatural kingdom of God exists and lives on this earth only in a preparatory and transitory status. Its real *patria* or homeland is in heaven, where it is meant to exist and where it will exist forever in the glory of the Beatific Vision. In the cities of this world it lives only in pilgrimage. Here it is the *ecclesia militans,* fighting against the forces that oppose it and that will render its operations difficult until the end of time. In heaven it will be the *ecclesia triumphans,* having overcome these opposing forces completely and forever.

For the understanding of this section of Catholic doctrine

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it is imperative to remember that the social unit which is now the Church militant is the very same community which will one day be the Church triumphant. Our Lord taught us this lesson in His explanation of the parable of the cockle in the field, one of the great parables of the kingdom.

> Who made answer and said to them: He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man.
> And the field is the world. And the good seed are the children of the kingdom. And the cockle are the children of the wicked one.
> And the enemy that sowed them is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world. And the reapers are the angels.
> Even as the cockle therefore is gathered up and burnt with fire: so shall it be at the end of the world.
> The Son of man shall send his angels: and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity.
> And shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There, shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
> Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.[3]

On the day of judgment, according to Our Lord Himself, His kingdom will be purified. Those who have lived and died in that kingdom as "the children of the wicked one" will be removed from it forever. These are the Catholics who have passed from this life in the condition of mortal sin, working for objectives other than the love of God and objectives in defiance and contempt of God. Such individuals have set themselves definitely to work for the objectives of the kingdom of Satan.

Within the kingdom there will remain, to be glorified forever, those who have died in the state of grace either as members of this kingdom on earth or as people who sincerely and genuinely desired to be members despite the fact that in this world they could not actually enter the Church as members. The desire which this latter group expressed to God in the form of prayer will be answered. God will give them what they have asked. The kingdom of God, thus

[3] *Matt.*, 13: 37-43.

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purified and glorified, will exist forever as the Church triumphant.

The community which exists in this world as the *ecclesia militans* will be the Church triumphant despite the changes in its condition that will be effected on the last day. After its purification and glorification it will no longer be plagued by the disloyal and sinful members who have impeded its work here on earth. It will no longer be subject to persecution and suffering inflicted by opposition from the outside. Finally, and this is most important, it will be no longer subject to the internal conditions which are attached to it precisely by reason of its earthly sojourn.

Thus the entire human government of the Church will no longer have to function in the *ecclesia triumphans.* There will be no more need for the sacraments, which are essentially signs, in the Church when that company possesses the Good of which the sacraments are the signs. It is to the Church, in its final and triumphant status, that these words of the Apocalypse apply:

> And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb.
>
> And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it: and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.
>
> And the nations shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it.
>
> And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day: for there shall be no night there.
>
> And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.
>
> There shall not enter into it any thing defiled or that worketh abomination or maketh a lie: but they that are written in the book of life of the Lamb.[4]

This citation from the Apocalypse speaks of the Chruch triumphant as a city. The term "city," however, is employed in the writings of the older ecclesiologists to bring out still another aspect of the divine teaching about the concept of the true Church. These earlier writers spoke of the Church as

[4] *Apoc.*, 21: 22-27.

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the City of God precisely insofar as it is a social unit set against and opposed by the kingdom of Satan. They summarized under the heading of "the City of God" that portion of divine doctrine about the Church set forth in the opening lines of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Humanum genus.*

According to this part of Catholic doctrine, the entire human race since the sin of Adam has been divided into two distinct and mutually opposed communities. The one is the kingdom of Satan, the domain of "the prince of this world." The other is the kingdom of God, the true Church of Jesus Christ. During the entire course of history these two communities have struggled against one another. They will continue to do so until the day of the final judgment.

Essential to this section of Catholic doctrine is the truth that every human being who has lived since the sin of Adam has belonged to one of these two societies. The conflict between them is the basic conflict of human history. There never has been, there is not now, and there never will be any group of human beings not contained within one or the other of these two groups.

The kingdom of God is composed of those who profess to accept His supernatural law, incorporated into His revealed message. Its work is the accomplishment of God's glory through the sanctification and the salvation of men.

The work of salvation is the work of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ Our Lord. The kingdom of God, then, is the company of those who have been incorporated into Christ, who compose the Body of which He is the Head. It is, in this state of the New Testament, the visible Catholic Church.

The kingdom of Satan, then, embraces all of those who have not been incorporated into Christ, and those who have left or been cast out of His community. Since the sin of Adam, every person who has been born, with the exception of Our Lord and of Our Blessed Mother, has entered this world in the state of original sin. As such, they have begun their lives within the kingdom of Satan, since it is one of the consequences of sin or aversion from God that it inevitably

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carries with it a kind of subjection to the leader in the work of sin, the foremost among the enemies of the living God.

Hence, according to this Catholic teaching, there is no such thing as entrance into the kingdom of God except by way of a transfer from the kingdom of Satan. And, on the other hand, no man leaves the kingdom of Satan except to enter the true and supernatural kingdom of God. Thus it is only within the city of God that salvation from sin and from the eternal death of sin is to be attained.

When the older ecclesiologists described the Church as the household of the faith, they brought out the relation to God and to Our Lord and to each other which has been granted to those within the kingdom. Those who live within the true *ecclesia* are those who have received Our Lord. They are the people thus described in the Gospel according to St. John:

> He was in the world: and the world was made by him: and the world knew him not.
>
> He came unto his own: and his own received him not.
>
> But as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name.
>
> Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.[5]

Our Lord Himself described these people, His disciples, as His own family. Thus it is recounted in the Gospel according to St. Matthew:

> And one said to him: Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee.
>
> But he answering him that told him, said: Who is my mother and who are my brethren?
>
> And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren.
>
> For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.[6]

The household of the faith has its own family repast, the Eucharistic banquet, the reality which is the sacrifice of the

[5] *John*, 1: 10-13.

[6] *Matt.*, 12: 47-50.

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true *ecclesia* of the New Testament. Those who belong to it are the friends and the intimates of the Lord.

When we consider the Church as Our Lord's Body, we are led to see how He is its Founder and Sustainer and Sanctifier. As the Head of His Mystical Body, He rules and teaches those within it. They co-operate, each in his assigned station, in a work which is His own. They act as His instrument in His accomplishments for God's glory.

As the Temple of God, the Church is the community within which the Blessed Trinity resides, in an indwelling appropriated to the Holy Ghost. It is the company to which Our Lord's promises were made and in which they are fulfilled.

The Four Dimensions

If we are to sum up the teachings about the Church contained in divine revelation, we can do so quite effectively if we consider the concept of the *ecclesia* according to four dimensions.

First, the Church bears a relation to the Triune God, to the sacred humanity of Christ, to Our Lady, and to the saints. This we may call the upward dimension.

Second, the Church militant of the New Testament cannot be properly or adequately described apart from reference to the kingdom of God, the *ecclesia* of the Old Testament. This is the historical dimension of the concept of the true Church.

Third, the Church militant of the New Testament cannot be adequately conceived or described apart from reference to the Church triumphant. This is the para-historical dimension.

Fourth, this Church cannot be adequately conceived and described apart from reference to the kingdom of Satan, the social unit which is unalterably opposed to it and within which all of those who are not incorporated into the Church are contained. This is the background of the Church.[7]

[7] Cf. Fenton, "The Church in Adequate Perspective," in *AER*, CXXXIII, 4 (Oct., 1955), 258-74.

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There is no such thing as an adequate examination of the divinely revealed teaching about the nature of the true Church unless all of these four dimensions are taken into consideration explicitly. Our awareness of God's supernatural kingdom on earth would be quite imperfect and subject to serious confusion were we not to take cognizance of these four distinct sets of relations.

It goes without saying that we could never begin to appreciate the nature and the dignity of the Church if we failed to consider the fact that it is genuinely God's one and only supernatural kingdom, that it is the Church and the Mystical Body of Christ, and that it is the realm over which Our Lady reigns as Queen. Any neglect along this line would result in a failure to appreciate the powers and the activities of the Church itself. And, in the same way, it is impossible to know the Church as God has actually constituted and described it unless we are clearly aware of the fact that this society of the disciples, established directly and immediately by Our Lord during the course of His earthly life, is the continuation and the final stage on this earth of the supernatural kingdom of God in Christ which has been in existence since the time of our first parents.

In exactly the same way, the nature of the *ecclesia* cannot be understood apart from an explicit realization of the fact that the *ecclesia militans* existing and contending against opposition here on earth is the very same society which will one day reign in heaven as the *ecclesia triumphans.* Our Lord, in His parables of the kingdom, made it abundantly clear that the company which will enjoy the Beatific Vision forever is not a newly constituted group, but the kingdom which has lived in this world and which will be purified and prepared on the last day.

Finally, it is an integral part of the revealed teaching about the Church that this society is one of the two social units into which the entire human race has been divided since the time of Adam's sin. This, incidentally, is the doctrine on which St. Peter's command to his hearers on the first Christian

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Pentecost obviously depends. He exhorted his hearers on that day to save themselves from this "perverse generation." The text of the Acts of the Apostles asserts that those who "received his word were baptized: and there were added in that day about three thousand souls." [8]

The "word" which these people received was clearly St. Peter's exhortation to the people to save themselves from this "perverse generation." This "perverse generation" was obviously the kingdom of Satan, the domain of "the prince of this world." The individuals who "received" this word were the people who obeyed him and who actually took themselves out of the domain of God's spiritual enemy.

This salvation from the kingdom of Satan was accomplished in the only way possible, by entrance into the true and only kingdom of God. The people who were saved were added to the group already in existence, the group which, according to the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles had counted about one hundred and twenty men of voting age immediately after Our Lord's ascension into heaven. The people who, obeying St. Peter's command, saved themselves from the kingdom of Satan, did not set up any new social group, but "were added" to this already existent congregation which had begun to exist as the *ecclesia*, the one and only kingdom of God on earth, at the moment of Our Lord's death on the Cross.

Now, the adequate concept of the Church, the one which takes explicit cognizance of all four of the requisite dimensions, is such as to bring out with matchless clarity and certitude the doctrine that there is no salvation for anyone outside the Catholic Church. First of all, it assures us that these four dimensions of the supernatural kingdom of God on earth belong to the visible and organized religious community over which the Bishop of Rome presides as the Vicar of Christ on earth. The social unit which is the kingdom of God, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, and the realm of Our Lady, which is the continuation and the final status of the *ecclesia* in this world, which is the Church triumphant in its prepara-

[8] *Acts*, 2: 41.

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tory and sojourning stage, the *ecclesia* in pilgrimage awaiting its call to its eternal *patria*, which is the one kingdom of God embracing all those who are not in the "perverse generation" that is the dominion of "the prince of this world," is the visible Roman Catholic Church.

Then it shows us that salvation is possible only by union with Our Lord and by removal from the domain of the spiritual enemy of God. This is to be effected by, and only by, a transfer from the kingdom of Satan into the true Church of Jesus Christ. And, since the Church triumphant is only the continuation of the Church militant, the *ecclesia* which lives now here on earth, the people who attain the Beatific Vision in the Church triumphant are and can only be the individuals who have passed from this life "within" the Church militant. That is the true Catholic doctrine, and the clear teaching of the parables of the kingdom.

Obviously the first of these "dimensions" is the one upon which all the force of the teaching on the Catholic Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation ultimately rests. The Church is that outside of which no one at all can be saved because it is the *ecclesia*, the community which constitutes the one and only supernatural kingdom of the living God, and because it is the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Divine Redeemer. And this necessity for the attainment of salvation is a property of the Catholic Church because God, in His goodness and wisdom, has decreed that this visible society should be His supernatural kingdom of the New Testament. When we look at the Church in terms of the four dimensions, it becomes immediately apparent that this society can be described and identified precisely in the light of its necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation. This, as a matter of fact, was the procedure employed by St. Augustine. His statement in a sermon delivered to the people of the Church at Caesarea is an exact expression of Catholic teaching.

Outside of the Catholic Church one can have anything except salvation. One can have honor. One can have the sacraments. The "Alleluia" can be sung. The response "Amen" can be given. One

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can hold to the Gospel, and can have and preach the faith in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. But one can never find salvation except in the Catholic Church.[9]

Thus, when the divinely revealed teaching is viewed at all adequately, the true Church of Jesus Christ is seen as the social unit within which alone man has access to salvation. The process of salvation involves a transfer from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God, which is Our Lord's true Church. The attainment of the Beatific Vision, the ultimate and perfective salvation of man, involves dying "within" the Church militant. The Church militant of the New Testament is, by God's own institution, the visible and organized society we know as the Roman Catholic Church.

Salvation and Membership in the Church

The authoritative documents of the teaching Church cited in the first part of this book, particularly the Holy Office letter *Suprema haec sacra*, have made it abundantly clear that, according to God's revealed message, it is not necessary to be a member of the Catholic Church at the moment of death in order to attain to the Beatific Vision. We know that under certain circumstances a man may be saved if, at the moment of his death, he is not actually a member of the Church but only one who intends or wills to be within it. We know also that this desire or intention of entering the Church can be effective for the attainment of eternal salvation even when it is only implicit.

The *Suprema haec sacra* explains this truth in terms of the fact that the Catholic Church, like the sacrament of baptism, is requisite for the attainment of the Beatific Vision, not by any intrinsic necessity, but by reason of God's own choice or institution. Now, when we are considering the adequate concept of the Lord's true *ecclesia* in terms of its necessity for the attainment of salvation, we should examine this portion of the Catholic doctrine about it.

[9] St. Augustine, *Sermo ad Caesariensis ecclesiae plebem*, 6. *MPL*, XLIII, 695.

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A thing is said to be necessary for salvation with an intrinsic necessity when this thing is an essential element or factor in the life of sanctifying grace to which the Beatific Vision itself belongs. Thus divine charity is intrinsically necessary for salvation. The affection of charity is the love of friendship for God as He is known supernaturally, in the Trinity of His Persons. Thus the love of charity is essentially a part of the life of the Beatific Vision both in heaven and here in this world. Where such a love does not exist, the life of the Beatific Vision, the life of sanctifying grace, does not exist.

Genuine supernatural faith, that virtue by which we accept the truths God has revealed as perfectly certain precisely on His authority, is an essential part of the life of sanctifying grace during its preparatory status in this world. There can obviously be no such thing as a supernatural life with reference to God, known in the Trinity of His Persons, apart from an awareness of Him in this way. In the *patria* of heaven, those who belong to the Church triumphant understand the Triune God in the Beatific Vision itself. But the Beatific Vision is precisely the reward of, the thing merited in, the life of grace in this world. The possession of the Beatific Vision is incompatible with the status of one in the Church militant.

The Beatific Vision is the direct, intuitive, and clear understanding of the Blessed Trinity. And, apart from the Beatific Vision itself, the only certain knowledge or apprehension of the Blessed Trinity and of the supernatural order that centers around the Blessed Trinity is to be found in the acceptance of a supernaturally revealed message about the realities of this order. The certain acceptance of that body of revealed truth, made possible by the gift of God's grace, is the assent of divine faith. Thus faith is absolutely requisite for the living of the supernatural life of grace in its preparatory status in this world. And, because only those who have passed from this life living the life of sanctifying grace can attain to the Beatific Vision, faith is absolutely necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation.

As as result, there can be no such thing as any substitute

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for the actual possession of faith and hope and charity as requisites for the attainment of the life of heaven. A man could not be saved if he were to have faith and charity merely in desire or intention at the moment he passed from this life. A desire or willingness to believe with the act of faith or to love God with the affection of charity definitely would not and could not take the place of faith and charity themselves. If a man is to attain eternal salvation he must possess genuine supernatural faith and the true and supernatural love of charity at the moment of his death.

Now, faith and hope and charity are factors or elements entering into the composition of the Catholic Church itself. Together they constitute what the older theologians called the inward or spiritual bond of unity within the Church, joining men to God and to each other within this company. Furthermore, they are intrinsically or absolutely necessary as components of God's supernatural kingdom on earth. There could be no such thing as the *ecclesia*, the people of the Covenant, the company of men and women who subject themselves to the divine law directing them to the supernatural end of the Beatific Vision apart from the acceptance of that supernatural message in faith and obedience to it in charity.

Furthermore, faith, hope and charity are completely inseparable from the *ecclesia* as factors uniting those who belong to the supernatural kingdom of God on earth with one another. There could be no such thing as a social unit identifiable as the true Church of Jesus Christ apart from the inward or spiritual bond of union of faith and hope and charity.

In the composition of the Church militant of the New Testament there are, however, two distinct bonds of unity, two sets of forces tending to unite men to God and to each other in Jesus Christ. Besides this inward or spiritual bond, there is another, designated by some of the classical theologians as the outward or bodily bond of unity within the true Church. This outward bond consists in the baptismal profession of the faith, access to or communion in the sacraments, and subjection to the legitimate pastors of the Church.

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This second or outward bond of union within the true Church is something made necessary in the supernatural life only because of God's free choice. None of its elements, taken in themselves, are necessarily parts of the life of sanctifying grace. There could have been an *ecclesia*, a supernatural kingdom of God on earth, in which these elements would not have entered. And, as a matter of fact, during its various Old Testament stages, God's *ecclesia* on this earth did not contain the factors which go to compose the outward bond of ecclesiastical unity in the Church militant of the New Testament.

These factors actually belong to the composition of the true *ecclesia* in its final status in this world only because God, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, freely decreed that they should do so. He established His supernatural kingdom of the New Testament as a visible and organized society. He constituted it with this definite set of factors which go to make up the outward or visible bond of unity within it. He formed His Church of the New Testament in such a way that membership in it depended entirely on the possession of that outward bond of ecclesiastical unity.

Because the factors that enter into membership in the Church militant of the New Testament belong to the composition of the true *ecclesia* only by reason of God's free choice, and not because they enter into the actual life of sanctifying grace, it has pleased God in His goodness and mercy to allow men to have the benefits of this membership when it is really impossible for them to attain the membership in itself and when they sincerely desire to enter and to remain within His *ecclesia*. If there is a sincere and supernatural will to come and to stay within the true Church of Jesus Christ, the man who has that desire will realize that the good he seeks is something only God will be able to give. The expression of that desire to God in the form of a petition is the act of prayer.

Now prayer, the act of worship which consists in the petition of fitting things from God, is infallibly efficacious, according

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to Our Lord's own promise.[10] It is infallibly effective for the attainment of the individual benefits sought in it when certain conditions have been fulfilled. The prayer must be said for one's self, and must seek either eternal salvation of something necessary for the attainment of salvation if it is to obtain its effect without fail. It must also be pious, that is, enlightened by true divine faith and motivated by the theological act of hope and by some supernatural love of benevolence for God. Finally, it must be persevering, that is, it must be the expression of a genuine desire or will of the person offering the prayer.[11]

When a man desires or prays for entrance into the true Church of Jesus Christ, even when this objective is apprehended only in an implicit way by the person praying, the first two of these conditions are necessarily fulfilled. The prayer is offered for the person himself, and it seeks a good which is truly requisite for the attainment of eternal salvation. In order that this prayer for entrance into the Church may be effective for salvation, the prayer and the intention behind it must be enlightened by faith and motivated or animated by charity. And it must also be a persevering prayer.

If a person who is praying in this way should die before he can actually become a member of the Church, then by the very force of his prayer, he will die as one contained "within" the Church by will or desire. And if the person who is praying in this way dies loving God and his neighbor with the love of charity, that person leaves this world "within" the true Church of Christ on earth and will remain in the Church triumphant for all eternity.

It must not be imagined that such an individual has his prayers answered only by the granting of a fictitious connection with the true *ecclesia*. The individual who accepts God's supernatural revelation with the certain assent of faith and who loves God with the affection of charity is actually and

[10] Cf. *Mark*, 11: 24; *John*, 16: 23.

[11] Cf. Fenton, *The Theology of Prayer* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1939), pp. 206-15.

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necessarily ordering his conduct in accord with the corporate activity of the true Church itself. We must never lose sight of the teaching about the nature of the true Church set forth in the opening passage of Pope Leo's encyclical *Humanum genus* if we are to understand this section of Catholic doctrine. According to that document, the kingdom of God, which is the true Church of Jesus Christ, "steadfastly contends for truth and virtue" in such a way that "those who desire from their heart to be united with it so as to gain salvation must of necessity serve God and His only-begotten Son with their whole mind and with an entire will." [12]

Now, it is the basic contention of that part of Catholic doctrine presented in this passage of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical that this work of God's supernatural kingdom in this world is continuously and bitterly opposed by the kingdom of Satan. The non-member of the Church who has faith and charity and who sincerely desires to enter the Church has organized his life to fight on the side of the *ecclesia* for the objectives which the *ecclesia* seeks.

It must be remembered that God's supernatural kingdom here on earth has no corporate allies in its warfare against the kingdom of "the prince of this world." There is not, and there never will be, another social unit fighting alongside the true Church for the attainment of those ends for which the Church contends. If a man really fights for truth and virtue, if he really works to serve and to glorify the Triune God, then he is fighting on the side of, and in a very real sense "within," the true Church itself.

And, if a man really has divine charity, he is actually fighting this battle for the Church. The virtue of charity is the ultimate motivating force in the life and conduct of the man who possesses it. It is something intensely and essentially active. If a man really loves God with the affection of charity, his activity is necessarily directed toward the objective of pleasing God. If, on the other hand, a man is not working to please

[12] *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII*, p. 83.

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God, to glorify and serve Him, this man does not truly love God with the love of charity.

The situation of the person who is not a member of the Church, but who is " within " it by intention, desire or prayer, can be understood best in comparison with the condition of a Catholic in the state of mortal sin. Despite the fact that he is a member of the society which " steadfastly contends for truth and virtue," this individual's will is turned away from God and strives for objectives opposed to those sought by the Church. He is one of those " who refuse to obey the divine and eternal law, and who have many aims of their own in contempt of God, and many aims also against God." In other words, in spite of his membership in the supernatural kingdom of God on earth, he is actually working and fighting for the things the kingdom of Satan seeks.

The ultimate orientation of a man's activity comes from the supreme intention of his will. For the man in the state of grace, this supreme intention is the love of charity. It is the desire to please God in all things. The man in the state of mortal sin has some other supreme objective. There is some end he seeks in contempt of God. Even though some of his acts are good in themselves, ultimately his life is directed to the attainment of that end, which is the purpose of the kingdom of Satan.

If a member of the Church should die in the state of mortal sin, he will be condemned forever to hell, the homeland of Satan's kingdom. He will, in other words, be assigned forever to the social unit in which and with which he was fighting at the moment of his passage from this life. In exactly the same way, the non-member of the Church who dies believing God's message with the assent of faith, loving God with the affection of charity, and sincerely willing and praying to enter God's *ecclesia*, will live forever in the social unit within which he willed and prayed to live and for which he was fighting at the moment of his death.

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III

SOME SOURCES OF MISUNDERSTANDING

This book would not be complete without at least a quick indication of the historical accidents which have brought about inadequate and even inaccurate teachings about the Church's necessity for salvation in some sections of the popular Catholic literature of our day. It is quite evident to anyone who is well acquainted with popular Catholic writing during the past century that this dogma has been misunderstood and misinterpreted more extensively and more profoundly during this period than any other portion of Catholic teaching. Even today, after the appearance of the *Mystici Corporis Christi*, the *Suprema haec sacra*, and the *Humani generis*, we still sometimes encounter objectionable interpretations of this doctrine.

Most of the faulty explanations of this dogma stem from a lamentably inadequate notion of the Church itself. During the past century there have been a good many Catholic writers who could never seem to realize the complete truth of the doctrine that the visible Roman Catholic Church is actually the same thing as the Mystical Body of Christ and the supernatural kingdom of God on earth. The lesson taught in the *Mystici Corporis Christi* and reiterated in the *Humani generis* was badly needed in the world of Catholic letters.

Now, it is quite apparent to any student of the history of sacred theology that there is no other section of Catholic doctrine in which such widespread and profound misunderstanding occurred. There has been no such fairly widespread misinterpretation of revealed truth within, for instance, the confines of the treatises on the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation. The fact that such a condition was possible on this particular subject, within the theological treatise on God's Church, certainly requires explanation. And the reason for this condition is quite manifest in the history of the treatise *de ecclesia*.

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In the first place, it must be remembered that the theological treatise on the Church was one of the last sections of dogmatic theology to take scientific form. Scholastic theology has been studied intensively since the twelfth century. For all intents and purposes, the treatises which have been investigated and written up most perfectly were those contained in Peter the Lombard's *Libri sententiarum* and later in St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologica.*

In the old scholastic arrangement of ecclesiastical studies there was at least as much about the Church in Gratian's *Decretum* as there was in the *Four Books of Sentences* or in the *Summa theologica.* And, under these old conditions, the nearest thing to a scholastic treatise on the Church was to be found incorporated into some occasional writing, like Moneta of Cremona's controversial work against the Waldensians and the Cathari or the *Commentary on the Apostles' Creed* by St. Thomas. The *De regimine christiano* by James of Viterbo came out at the very beginning of the fourteenth century. It was a complete book, but it was essentially and primarily polemical in purpose.

It was not until the middle of the fifteenth century that the first well-developed treatise on the Church in scholastic literature appeared. This was the famous *Summa de ecclesia,* written by the Dominican Cardinal John de Turrecremata. It too had a controversial objective, but it attained its purpose by means of a thorough scholastic study of what God has revealed about the nature and the characteristics of His kingdom on earth.

The *Summa de ecclesia* has always been a rare book. It was last published in Venice in 1561. It was never commented and explained in the way the *Four Books of Sentences* and the *Summa theologica* have been. If it had been used as a source book for a genuine study and development of the scholastic treatise on the Church, the history of this treatise would certainly have been different.

Actually the *Summa de ecclesia* was never used as it might have been and should have been because of the historical

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accident of the Reformation. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, the theologians of the Catholic Church became engaged in the most serious controversy that has ever centered around the treatise *de ecclesia*. The Protestant writers defended the thesis that the true and genuine supernatural kingdom of God on earth was not an organized society at all, but merely the sum-total of all the good men and women in this world. They classified their own religious organizations, those of the Lutherans, the Calvinists and the like, as merely voluntary societies which could be helpful to people who were already within the *ecclesia* through membership in what they called the "invisible Church."

The Catholic writers who first opposed the Protestant polemicists successfully defended the revealed truth that God, in His wisdom and mercy, has actually constituted the one and only true *ecclesia* of the New Testament as an organized society, the religious unit which is described in the Acts of the Apostles and which exists now as the Roman Catholic Church. But these first Catholic champions of truth in the controversy against the Protestant authors were primarily polemicists themselves. Their works were not, and did not claim to be, anything like complete or adequate treatises on the true Church. They merely set out to unmask the errors defended by their opponents. They did not explain those points on which there was no controversy whatsoever. Perhaps the best examples of this procedure are to be found in Michael Vehe's *Assertio sacrorum quorundam axiomatum*, John Eck's *Enchiridion locorum communium*, and especially in Peter Soto's *Assertio catholicae fidei circa articulos confessionis nomine Illustrissimi Ducis Wirtenbergensis oblatae per legatos eius Concilio Tridentino*.

It is a matter of fact that the Protestant writers were perfectly convinced that there is no salvation attainable outside the true Church of God on earth. Hence there was no need for the Catholic theologians to dispute them on this particular point. And, since the writings of these Catholic theologians were directed at that time primarily and essentially to the

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refutation of the Protestant position, the dogma on the necessity of the Church for the attainment of salvation was not treated at all extensively in these writings.

The next generation of Catholic theologians who wrote about the Church included some of the most brilliant men God has ever given to the study of sacred theology. Among them were such figures as Thomas Stapleton, John Wiggers, Melchior Cano, Francis Suárez, St. Robert Bellarmine, Gregory of Valencia, Dominic Báñez, Adam Tanner, and Francis Sylvius. Some writers of the first generation of Counter-Reformation theologians had recently begun to organize the content of this Catholic controversial teaching. The Louvain teachers John Driedo and James Latomus were pre-eminent in this group. The men of the second generation developed and explained what these earlier writers had set forth.

Some of these second generation writers, like Stapleton, organized their teachings into monographs. Others, like Cano, St. Robert and Sylvius, incorporated them into more or less extensive summaries of Catholic controversy. Wiggers and Báñez and others, however, inserted this controversial theology *de ecclesia* into their scholastic commentaries on St. Thomas' *Summa theologica*. This tactic was destined to have immense repercussions in the history of the scholastic treatise *de ecclesia*.

Of course, at that time no real place had been found in the actual organization of the *Summa theologica* for a *tractatus de ecclesia*. Wiggers, Báñez, Gregory of Valencia, and Tanner, however, attempted to make a place by inserting this treatise as a kind of appendix after the matter treated by St. Thomas in the first question of his *Secunda secundae*. In every case, however, the material thus incorporated into a commentary on the *Summa*, a work of the highest order in the field of speculative scholastic theology, was the same essentially controversial material which polemicists like St. Robert Bellarmine and Francis Sylvius had included in their *Controversiae*. It was, in other words, the development of the teaching which had been contained in the works of the

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original Counter-Reformation theologians who had, for all intents and purposes, limited themselves to the point of Catholic doctrine which had been directly opposed by the Protestant heresiarchs. No one of these writings has anything like an adequate treatment of the dogma that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church.

The tradition which had been epitomized and perfected in Turrecremata's *Summa de ecclesia* had given special attention to this dogma. After all, the necessity for the attainment of salvation is one of the basic characteristics of God's supernatural kingdom on earth. Turrecremata gave adequate attention to it, just as he gave adequate attention to the task of explaining the characteristics of the true Church by describing the titles applied to this social unit and to its members in Scripture and in divine apostolic tradition.

In the works of the great Counter-Reformation theologians, however, the dogma is mentioned primarily with reference to the teaching that neither catechumens nor excommunicated persons are members of the true Church. Theologians like Stapleton and St. Robert, who were the first to use the terminology which was to become classical, take cognizance of the dogma when they consider objections to their own teaching. St. Robert taught rightly that a catechumen is not a member of the Church. He likewise upheld the Catholic truth that a catechumen can be saved if he should die before he has the opportunity to receive the sacrament of baptism. Looking at the dogma that no one can be saved outside the Church as an objection urged against his own teaching, St. Robert, following the example of Thomas Stapleton, asserts that the dogma means that a man cannot be saved if he is not within the Church either in reality as a member, or *in voto* as one who desires or intends to become a member.[1]

Such, following the example of Stapleton and of St. Robert, was the procedure of all the classical ecclesiologists of the Counter-Reformation period. And, despite the fact that

[1] Cf. St. Robert, *De ecclesia militante*, c. 3; Stapleton, *Principiorum fidei doctrinalium demonstratio methodica* (Paris, 1579), p. 314.

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neither Stapleton nor St. Robert produced textbooks of scholastic theology, their approach to the dogma of the Church's necessity for salvation and their very terminology entered into the fabric of these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts of scholastic theology. These commentaries developed, through "Courses" like those produced by John of St. Thomas, the Salmanticences, Tournely and Billuart, into the nineteenth- and twentieth-century manuals of dogmatic theology. The *tractatus de ecclesia* in these modern manuals was basically the kind of thing which had been inserted into the commentaries of Wiggers, Báñez, and Tanner. And, in these modern manuals, the treatment of the dogma that there is no one saved outside the Church is of the sort to be found in the works of St. Robert and of Sylvius, and not of the type found in Turrecremata's *Summa de ecclesia.*

That in itself has been highly unfortunate for the well-being of the scholastic theology about the Church. The teaching that a man could be in the Church only in intention or desire and not as a member and still attain eternal salvation "within" this society is, of course, tremendously important. It is a part of Catholic doctrine about the nature of God's *ecclesia.* But the learning of this section of Catholic truth in no way makes up for neglect of the equally important doctrine that the Church is essentially, as actually instituted by God Himself, the vehicle and, as it were, the terminus of the process of salvation. Because the modern manuals took the tradition of Stapleton and of St. Robert to the exclusion of that of Turrecremata, they were doctrinally impoverished by an inadequate explanation of the dogma.

The modern writers whose aberrations were reproved in the *Singulari quadam* and more recently in the *Humani generis* had available to them in their contemporary manuals of sacred theology a highly inadequate exposition of the dogma. All of the attention was focussed, in these manuals, on bringing out the fact that membership in the Church was not necessary with the necessity of means for the attainment of eternal life.

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There was almost nothing in them to show how the Church itself, by its very institution, belongs in the scheme of salvation.

This impoverishment of the *tractatus de ecclesia* as a result of the historical accident of the controversy against the Protestants was not by any means the only, or even the most serious, blow dealt to the explanation of the dogma of the necessity of the Church in the literature of scholastic theology. One of the most tragic, yet in some ways comical, stories recounted in the history of theology has to do with a highly important misunderstanding of the teaching set forth by St. Robert himself in the most important of his writings, the book *De ecclesia militante*. This misunderstanding had most unfortunate consequences in the teaching about the necessity of the Church for the attainment of salvation.

St. Robert's *De ecclesia militante* is essentially devoted to the defense of one thesis: the truth that God's true and only *ecclesia* of the New Testament is an organized and visible social unit. This thesis is presented in the second chapter of the book, and all the rest of the work is devoted to a detailed and classically effective demonstration of this truth. It will be impossible to understand how St. Robert's teaching was misinterpreted without a knowledge of what he actually said in that second chapter.

The first part of this chapter "On the Definition of the Church" is devoted to the description and the refutation of the various theories evolved by heretics to explain the composition of the true Church militant of the New Testament. St. Robert deals with five of these theories, and then sets forth his own teaching, which is true Catholic doctrine. This is the pertinent section of the second chapter.

> But it is our teaching that there is only one *ecclesia*, and not two, and that this one and true Church is the assembly of men bound together by the profession of the same Christian faith and the communion of the same sacraments, under the rule of the legitimate pastors, and especially that of the Roman Pontiff, the one Vicar of Christ on earth. From this definition it is easy to infer which men belong to the Church and which do not belong to it. There are three parts of this definition; the profession of the true faith,

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the communion of the sacraments, and subjection to the Roman Pontiff, the legitimate pastor.

By reason of the first part all infidels, both those who have never been in the Church, such as Jews, Turks, and pagans; and those who have been in it and have left it, as heretics and apostates, are excluded. By reason of the second part catechumens and excommunicated persons are excluded, because the former are not yet admitted to the communion of the sacraments, while the latter have been sent away from it. By reason of the third part there are excluded the schismatics who have the faith and the sacraments, but who are not subject to the legitimate pastor and who thus profess the faith and receive the sacraments outside [of the Church]. All others are included [within the Church in the light of the definition] even though they be reprobates, sinful and impious men.

Now there is this difference between our teaching and all the others [the "definitions" offered by the various heretics, and discussed in the first section of this second chapter of the *De ecclesia militante*], that all the others require internal virtues to constitute a man "within" the Church, and hence make the true Church invisible. But, despite the fact that we believe that all the virtues, faith, hope, charity, and the rest, are to be found within the Church, we do not think that any internal virtue is required to bring it about that a man can be said absolutely to be a part of the true Church of which the Scriptures speak, but [that what is required for this] is only the outward profession of the faith and the communion of the sacraments, which are perceptible by the senses. For the Church is as visible and palpable an assembly of men as the assembly of the Roman people or the Kingdom of France or the Republic of the Venetians.

We must note what Augustine says in his *Breviculus collationis*, where he is dealing with the conference of the third day, that the Church is a living body, in which there is a soul and a body. And the internal gifts of the Holy Ghost, faith, hope, charity, and the rest are the soul. The external profession of the faith and the communication of the sacraments are the body. Hence it is that some are of the soul and of the body of the Church, and hence joined both inwardly and outwardly to Christ the Head, and such people are most perfectly within the Church. They are, as it were, living members in the body, although some of them share in this life to a greater extent, and others to a lesser extent, while still others have only the beginning of life and, as it were, sensation without movement, like the people who have only faith without charity.

Again, some are of the soul and not of the body, as catechumens

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and excommunicated persons if they have faith and charity, as they can have them.

And, finally, some are of the body and not of the soul, as those who have no internal virtue, but who still by reason of some temporal hope or fear, profess the faith and communicate in the sacraments under the rule of the pastors. And such individuals are like hairs or fingernails or evil liquids in a human body.

Consequently, our definition takes in only this last way of being in the Church, because this is required as a minimum in order that a man may be said to be a part of the visible Church.[2]

In the passage just quoted, St. Robert Bellarmine sets out to explain and to define the thesis he is going to defend and explain throughout the rest of the book *De ecclesia militante*. The outstanding talent of this great Doctor of the Church is precisely his power of forceful and clear exposition. In the section we have just cited, that talent was exercised as perfectly as it is in any section of his works.

St. Robert contends that the one and only supernatural kingdom of God on earth, the *ecclesia* spoken of in the Scriptures, has been constituted by God as a society composed of members or parts whose appurtenance to this company is manifest to all men. He asserts that the factors by which a man is constituted as a member or a part of this company are the profession of the true Christian faith, access to the sacraments, and subjection to the Roman Pontiff. The group which is God's one and only *ecclesia* in this world is actually the company of men who have these factors of unity.

He acknowledges the presence within the Church of faith, hope, charity, and the other supernatural virtues. Furthermore he realizes that these infused virtues themselves constitute another bond of unity with Our Lord and among His disciples. Nevertheless he insists that this spiritual or inward bond of unity is not the factor which constitutes a man as a part or a member of the Church militant of the New Testament.

Yet, despite the perfection of St. Robert's teaching and the clarity of his exposition, this section of the second chapter of his *De ecclesia militante* was destined to be the source of

[2] *De ecclesia militante*, c. 2.

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serious and highly unfortunate misunderstanding by subsequent theologians. The weak part of this, perhaps the most important single passage in the writings of any post-Tridentine theologian, was St. Robert's use of the terms "soul" and "body" with reference to the Church.

In the first place, St. Robert's reference to St. Augustine's *Breviculus collationis* is lamentably inexact. There is no such statement as "the Church is a living body, in which there is a soul and a body" to be found in any part of the *Breviculus collationis*. In a subsequent chapter of the *De ecclesia militante*, St. Robert again attributes this soul-body dichotomy to this particular book by St. Augustine, and there he indicates the sentence to which he obviously refers here as well as in the later chapter. In the ninth chapter of the *De ecclesia militante* we find the following passage.

> Because of these sources [a citation from one of St. Augustine's works and references to other statements made by him] not only Brenz and Calvin, but even some Catholics imagine that there are two Churches, but this is only imagination. For neither the Scriptures nor Augustine ever indicate two Churches, but they always speak of only one. Now, in the *Breviculus collationis*, in the account of the conference of the third day, when the Donatists were urging against the Catholics the calumny that the Catholics taught that there are two Churches, one containing only the good, and another containing good people along with evil individuals; the Catholics retorted that they had never dreamed that there were two Churches, but that they had only distinguished two parts or periods of the Church. There are parts, because good people belong to the Church in one way, and bad people in another. For the good people are the interior part and, as it were, the soul of the Church. The bad people are the outward part and, as it were, the body [of the Church]. And they gave the example of the inward and the outward man, who are not two men, but two parts of the same man.
>
> Distinguishing the periods of the Church, they say that the Church exists in one way now, and that it will exist in a different way after the resurrection. For now it has both good and evil [members]. Then it will have only the good. And they gave as an example Christ, who, although always the same, was mortal and subject to suffering prior to His resurrection but, after it, is immortal and not subject to suffering.[3]

[3] *Ibid.*, c. 9.

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With this passage from the ninth chapter of the *De ecclesia militante* before us, it is quite easy to find the passage of the *Breviculus collationis* to which St. Robert appealed to justify his use of the expression " body of the Church " and " soul of the Church." Here is the actual teaching of the *Breviculus collationis.*

> They [the Catholics] did not say that this Church which now has evil members interspersed within it is distinct from the kingdom of God, where there will be no evil members; but [they said] that the Church exists in one way now, and is going to exist in another way in the future. Now it has evil men mingled within it. Then it will not have them. Likewise now it is mortal, in that it is made up of mortal men. Then it will be immortal in that no one within it will die even a bodily death. In the same way there are not two Christs just because He first died and afterwards was immortal. And they also spoke of the outward and the inward man, who, although they are different, still cannot be said to be two men. There is even less reason to say that there are two Churches, since these very same good persons who now suffer the evil men mingled among them and die as people who are going to rise again are the ones who then will have no evil members mingled with them and will be completely immortal.[4]

In this passage the word " soul " does not occur at all. The word " body " is found once, but with a meaning completely different from any it might have when employed in the expression " body of the Church." In this section of the *Breviculus collationis* the word is used in a clause explaining that the Church triumphant is called immortal " *quod in ea nullus esset vel corpore moriturus.*" St. Augustine has used the word in explaining the Catholic teaching that the Church triumphant is truly immortal because none of its members will be subject to the spiritual death of sin or even to bodily death.

It would, of course, be grossly inaccurate to say that St. Robert misquoted the *Breviculus collationis.* He was a man of his own time and, in line with the customs of the period in which he lived, he referred to older writings in a way that

[4] St. Augustine, *Breviculus collationis cum Donatistis,* coll. 3, c. 10, n. 20. *MPL,* XLIII, 635.

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would be considered quite unacceptable according to the stricter standards of modern scholarship. The teaching he attributed to this section of the *Breviculus collationis* is actually to be found in that document, at least in an implicit manner. But St. Robert couched that teaching in his own terminology and, without quoting his document *verbatim*, wrote as though his own terminology as well as the truths expressed in that terminology were to be found in the original source.

St. Robert obviously was fond of employing the "body" and "soul" dichotomy to explain and illustrate various distinctions within the Church. In the two passages quoted from the *De ecclesia militante* in this book, we find the term "body" used with reference to the Church in three ways, and the word "soul" in two. He speaks of the Church itself as "a living body." Despite the fact that this terminology is not found in the *Breviculus collationis*, as St. Robert's manner of speaking would imply that it was, it is a standard expression used to describe the Church of God. Basically, of course, it is the name of the Church employed in the epistles of St. Paul. The Church is such that it can accurately be designated under the metaphor of a living body, the body of Christ.

In the very same sentence in which he speaks of the Church as "a living body," St. Robert states that "there is a soul and a body" within the Church. This "body" in the Church is described as consisting in "the external profession of the faith and the communication of the sacraments." The "soul" within the Church, according to the *De ecclesia militante*, is constituted by "the internal gifts of the Holy Ghost, faith, hope, charity, and the rest."

He then goes on to explain the function of the "body" and the "soul" that he has described as existing within the living body that is the true Church. He tells us that "some are of the soul and of the body of the Church, and hence joined both inwardly and outwardly to Christ, the Head." In other words, in this second chapter of the *De ecclesia militante*, "soul" and "body" are metaphorical names applied to two distinct

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sets of forces or factors that function as bonds of unity within the Church militant of the New Testament. A person who is what St. Robert calls "*de corpore ecclesiae*" is one united to Our Lord in His Mystical Body by the profession of the true faith, access to the sacraments, and subjection to legitimate ecclesiastical authority. The individual who is "*de anima ecclesiae*" is joined to Our Lord in His Church by all "the internal gifts of the Holy Ghost," or at least by genuine divine faith.

St. Robert was not by any means the first of the Counter-Reformation theologians to incorporate an explanation of these two factors or bonds of unity within the Church into his defense of the Catholic position. Some teaching along this line had always been a necessary part of the defense of Catholic truth against opponents who claimed that the true supernatural kingdom of God of the New Testament was not an organized society at all, but was merely the entire group of men and women in the state of grace. St. Augustine had faced a similar problem in his controversy against the Donatists, and his writings were freely used by the Catholic writers who defended the Church against the Protestant polemicists.

Two of the earlier Counter-Reformation theologians, John Driedo and James Latomus, both professors at Louvain, prepared the way for St. Robert by their work in describing these two bonds of unity within the true Church. Driedo spoke of them in this passage from his famous work, *De ecclesiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus.*

> Augustine teaches in the seventh book [*On Baptism*] against the Donatists that there are two ways of being in the House of God or in the Church. One way is to be in it as a member in the body of justice, that is, as one sharing in the spiritual life or joined with the other members in the spirit of charity. The other way to be in the House of God, or in the Church, is to be attached to the other members as the chaff is to the grain.[5]

Driedo goes on to explain that people must be considered

[5] Driedo, *De eccelsiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus* (Louvain, 1530), IV, c. 2, p. 517.

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to be in the Church or, as we would say today, to be members of the Church if four conditions are fulfilled. The members are those who are "visibly attached to the Church by the sacrament of faith," living peaceably with the Christian people, not having been expelled from the Church, and not having left it. His teaching on this point is exactly what St. Robert was to give in his *De ecclesia militante* half a century later.

The outward or visible bond of unity within the Church, the reality to which St. Robert attached the name "body of the Church," is described by Driedo as a joining "according to a kind of visible form of the Christian faith." What St. Robert called "the soul of the Church" appears in the *De ecclesiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus* as "the unity of the spirit and the bond (*vinculum*) of charity." Catholics in the state of mortal sin remain joined to the Church in a bodily way (*corporaliter*), although they are inwardly separated from it.

James Latomus refers to these two bonds of union within the Church as the bodily communication and the spiritual communication.

> All ecclesiastical communication is either bodily or spiritual. The spiritual communication belongs to those who are in the house as composing the house itself. This is the communication of those who possess charity and who are united to the one God and among themselves. Likewise this spiritual communication pertains to those who are in the house, but who are not parts of the house itself. These are still spiritually joined to the parts of the house; and, on the other hand, the parts of the house are joined to them in Catholic peace. Although this Catholic peace is the effect of charity, its extension is far greater than that of charity, and it is found in some persons in whom charity does not exist. I mean charity of a pure heart, through which the Holy Ghost dwells in a man's heart. Through this union the bad Catholic shares even spiritually in many gifts which the heretic and the schismatic do not share. The bad Catholic is deprived of these gifts when he is justly excommunicated and delivered over to Satan.
>
> Likewise the bodily communication is divided. There is a certain bodily communication according to place, and in a common life, and in the active and passive communication of the visible sacra-

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ments. There is another bodily communication of superior and subject.[6]

In the field of ecclesiology it is St. Robert Bellarmine's special glory that he clarified and perfected the teachings of Latomus and of Driedo on this particular section of the treatise on the Church, and used this teaching as the key to his classical definition of the Church in terms of its membership. What turned out to be quite unfortunate for the understanding of St. Robert's teaching by subsequent theologians was his application of the terms "body" and "soul" to the two bonds of union within the Church which had been recognized and described by his predecessors.

It is one of the ironical twists of history that St. Robert, pre-eminent among the writers of the Catholic Church for the clarity of his expression, should have offered the occasion for such serious misunderstanding. There can be no doubt whatsoever about the magnitude of his accomplishment in the line of clarity in his exposition of the two bonds of ecclesiastical unity. In effect, Latomus and Driedo had taught in what would be regarded today as a highly esoteric fashion. Their theses were couched in the words and phrases of St. Augustine, and a man would have to be fairly well aware of what St. Augustine had written, particularly in his controversial writings against the Donatists and in his *In epistulam Ioannis ad Parthos* in order to understand the full import of what either Latomus or Driedo had written. St. Robert, on the contrary, wrote effectively and clearly so that anyone capable of reading Latin would have no difficulty in grasping what he had to say.

It would have been easier for him and much more profitable for subsequent theologians if he had simply named the two bonds of unity in the Church for what they actually are. His brilliant younger contemporary, Francis Sylvius of Douai, did exactly that. Sylvius spoke of a twofold *colligatio* within

[6] Latomus, in his *Ad Oecolampadium responsio,* in the *Opera* (Louvain, 1550), 131v.

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the Church militant of the New Testament. He stated that: "One is internal, of minds, through faith and through the common affection which is called in the Second Epistle of St. Peter the 'love of the brotherhood (*amor fraternitatis*).'" And he explained that "the other bond of union is external, consisting in the administration and the reception of the sacraments and in other matters pertaining to the worship of God and to the administration of the Church." [7]

Obviously Sylvius, like many of his contemporaries, did not agree with St. Robert in his concept of membership in the Church. The Douai theologian was mistaken on this point, but he was much more felicitous than St. Robert had been in designating the factors which unite men with Our Lord and to each other in God's supernatural kingdom on earth.

The brilliant and distinguished Louvain theologian John Wiggers actually used and properly explained St. Robert's own terminology.

> And so the Church exists with, as it were, a twofold form, one internal and the other, in a way, external. For it has some characteristics that correspond to the soul and its perfections and ornaments, and still others that have an analogy with the external form of the body, as with its figures and facial properties and movements.
>
> Properly, faith corresponds to the soul of the Church. To the ornaments of the soul there correspond charity and the other virtues that accompany it and that belong to the dowry and the perfection of the Church. To the body there correspond the external profession of faith, the works of brotherly love, the communion of the sacraments, and perhaps other characteristics.[8]

In the course of the history of theology, however, St. Robert's expressions "soul" and "body" of the Church were not destined to receive the kind of treatment accorded them by Wiggers. They were doomed to serve as instruments for the reversal of St. Robert's teaching by theologians who, when they employed this part of St. Robert's terminology, seemed to imagine that they were actually repeating or at least de-

[7] Sylvius, *Controversiarum Liber Tertius*, in his *Opera omnia* (Antwerp, 1698), V, 237.

[8] Wiggers, *Commentaria de virtutibus theologicis* (Louvain, 1689), p. 97.

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veloping his teaching. The first slight step in this direction is observable in the immensely popular seminary manual, the *Breviarium theologicum* published in the seventeenth century by the Cambrai theologian, John Polman. In this manual the "body" and "soul" of the Church appear, not as parts of an explanation of a thesis, but as realities requiring definition in their own right.

> According to Clement of Alexandria and Augustine, the Church is like an animated human body. Faith, hope, charity, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost constitute its soul. The body is the external profession of faith, the communion of the sacraments, and the acknowledgment of the Roman Pontiff as the head. Of the soul alone are catechumens who intend to be baptized and who have faith, hope and charity. Occult heretics are of the body alone. Baptized persons in the state of grace are of the body and the soul.[9]

St. Robert had made it perfectly plain to anyone who took the trouble to read the *De ecclesia militante* in its entirety that he did not claim that the interior bond of unity within the Church was actually *the* soul of the Church. He applied the metaphorical title of "soul" of the Church to God the Holy Ghost, and he spoke of Catholics in the state of grace as constituting "as it were, the soul" of this society. In the same way, he spoke of the Church itself as a "body" and described bad Catholics as being "as it were, the body" of the Church. It was a misfortune for the history of theology that Polman's seminary manual led men to imagine that the inward bond of unity was *the* soul, and the outward bond was *the* body, of the Catholic Church.

The misuse of St. Robert's terminology went a step farther at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the well-written manual *Elementa theologica* written by the Sorbonne professor, Charles du Plessis d'Argentré. This book employs St. Robert's terminology in such a way as to undermine the basic thesis of the *De ecclesia militante*. Thus, in speaking of excommunicated persons, D'Argentré asserts that if they "profess the Catholic faith, they will be in some measure (*ali-*

[9] Polman, *Breviarium theologicum* (Paris, 1682), p. 206.

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quatenus) members of the Church by reason of its soul, that is, by faith, and perhaps by charity (if the excommunication is unjust)." He insists, however, that these individuals "are not of the body of the Church." [10]

St. Robert Bellarmine had constituted as the one basic thesis of his book *De ecclesia militante* the truth that, by God's own institution, the visible or outward bond of ecclesiastical unity, the thing he designated as the "body" of the Church, is the one and only element requisite for membership in the Church militant of the New Testament. He devoted all the resources of his talent and erudition to demonstrate the fact that the society composed of men united by this outward bond of unity is Our Lord's Mystical Body on earth. Less than a century after his death, the terminology peculiar to St. Robert's *De ecclesia militante* was being used to advance the thesis contradictory to his own teaching.

D'Argentré seems to have had the dubious distinction of having been the first to use the term "soul of the Church" in the Bellarminian sense to explain the Church's necessity for salvation. Like most of the books of its period, the *Elementa theologica* treats of the dogma of the necessity of the Church in the section devoted to catechumens and their relation to the Church. D'Argentré holds that "catechumens are certainly not of the body of the Church, but still there is nothing to prevent their being of the Church by reason of its soul (*quoad ejus animam*). With the desire of baptism this suffices for salvation." [11]

D'Argentré used St. Robert's own terminology, but made this "soul" of the Church something quite distinct from the internal bond of unity within the Church described by St. Robert. He says that the Church militant "must be considered as like a living body, which consists of Christ as the Head, the faithful as members, and faith, hope and charity as the soul, acting as a principle of spiritual life for the faithful." [12] His use of this "soul" of the Church as a factor which can

[10] D'Argentré, *Elementa theologica* (Paris, 1702), p. 167.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 166. [12] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

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make an excommunicated person "in some measure a member of the Church" and as a factor in the explanation of the Church's necessity for the attainment of eternal salvation is quite consistent with his own view of the matter. It is, however, completely inconsistent with the teaching of St. Robert.

Honoratus Tournely, an older confrere of D'Argentré on the faculty of the Sorbonne, carried the misuse and the misapplication of St. Robert's terminology far past the limits reached by D'Argentré. Tournely's manual was one of the most popular and influential textbooks employed during the eighteenth century. Through these books the basic misunderstanding of St. Robert's terminology and the consequent undermining of his basic thesis became widespread. Tournely used St. Robert's terminology to set forth theses about the Church which, in the last analysis, were the very doctrines St. Robert wrote the *De ecclesia militante* to disprove.

> The Church can be considered in two ways. First, [it can be considered] according to its interior status, or according to that part which we call the soul of the Church. Thus it is the society of those who are bound together by the bond of true faith in Christ and of sincere charity. In this sense it is entirely invisible. Only the saints and the just belong to it as true and living members. Secondly, it can be considered according to its exterior status, or according to the body, and insofar as it is the society of those who are joined together in the public profession of the same faith, and the communion of the same sacraments and ecclesiastical rulers. In this sense it is certain that the Church is visible and conspicuous.[13]

Tournely used St. Robert's expressions "soul" and "body" of the Church to inaugurate an explanation of the Church's necessity for salvation which was to become all too common among theologians until the appearance of the *Mystici Corporis Christi* and the *Suprema haec sacra*. He taught that "no one can be saved outside the Church, considered both in terms of the soul and of the body." As far as the "body of the Church" was concerned, Tournely treated it as if it were necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation only with the

[13] Tournely, *Praelectiones theologicae de ecclesia Christi* (Paris, 1739), I, 234.

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necessity of precept. He held that a man cannot be saved "if, through his own fault, he is not in the body of the Church." If a man is outside of the "body" through no fault of his own, then, according to the thought of Tournely, he can be saved. Such individuals, in Tournely's view, can be in the "body" of the Church by intention or desire.[14]

After Tournely, the process of changing the teaching of St. Robert through the use of his own terminology had not far to go. Heinrich Kilber, who wrote the treatise on the Church for the collection called the *Theologia Wirceburgensis*, brought these terms into his definitions of the Church, and thus used them to support doctrines utterly at variance with what St. Robert had taught.

> The Church of Christ, considered inadequately in function of the soul (*inadequate secundum animam considerata*), is the assembly of those called to the faith of Christ, conjoined to Christ by supernatural gifts.
>
> The Church of Christ, considered inadequately in function of the body, is the assembly of the baptized, united in the profession of the same Christian faith and in the communion of the same sacraments under the one Vicar of Christ on earth.
>
> The Church of Christ, considered adequately, is the assembly of the baptized faithful whom faith, hope and charity animate inwardly, and the profession of the same Christian faith and the communion of the same sacraments unite outwardly, under one Head in heaven, Christ, and under His Vicar on earth, the Sovereign Pontiff.[15]

What Kilber called an inadequate definition of the Church in function of its body is the very definition which St. Robert had shown to be the real description of the Church militant of the New Testament. St. Robert had used every resource available to him to prove conclusively that the Church cannot be defined in terms of its members other than through the use of the outward bond of ecclesiastical unity.

By the inept and unrealistic use of St. Robert's own termin-

[14] *Ibid.*, I, 654.

[15] Kilber, *Principia theologica* (in the *RR. Patrum Societatis Jesu Theologia Dogmatica, Scholastica et Moralis Praelectionibus Publicis in Alma Universitate Wirceburgensi Accommodata*, the Paris edition of 1880), I, 86 f.

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ology, Tournely had come up with a description of the Church as invisible, the very thing St. Robert had worked to prove that the Church militant of the New Testament is not. Kilber had imagined an "adequate" definition of Our Lord's Church which would apply only to Catholics in the state of grace.

There was only one more step possible in the process of misinterpreting St. Robert's teaching. That step was taken before the end of the eighteenth century. Tired of the complexity involved in trying to teach that "an inadequate definition of the Church in function of its soul," as given by theologians like Kilber, applies to an "invisible Church," Louis Legrand and other writers after him cut the Gordian knot and began to apply the term "soul of the Church" to the internal or invisible society they had imagined. According to Legrand, "the internal Church, which we call the soul of the Church, can be defined as the company of those in the state of grace, and especially of those who are predestined to eternal life, who are endowed with the living faith that works through charity." And, in the words of the same theologian, "the external or visible Church, which is called the body of the Church by Catholics, can be defined as the assembly of men gathered together and united in the profession of the true Christian faith, the correct use of the sacraments, and the administration instituted by Christ." [16]

These two definitions are contained in the sub-section entitled "On the More General Notion of the True Church."

[16] The passage is from Legrand's *De ecclesia*, in Migne's *Theologiae cursus completus*, IV, 25. It must be noted that Legrand was not by any means the first Catholic theologian to describe the just and the predestined as constituting some sort of unit within the Catholic Church. Thus, in the second book of his *Doctrinale antiquitatum fidei ecclesiae catholicae* (Venice, 1621), I, 160, Thomas Netter of Walden, the fifteenth-century English Carmelite, had described "the glorious Church of the predestined" as being *within* the visible Church "like a wheel within a wheel." And the sixteenth-century James Latomus, in his *De ecclesia et humanae legis obligatione*, had written of "the assembly of the good" *within* the "*ecclesia permixta*." Cf. his *Opera*, p. 93v. What is remarkable about Legrand's teaching is that he employed St. Robert's own terminology to bring out a doctrine—the existence of an "invisible Church"—which St. Robert had worked to disprove.

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In the following sub-section, "On the More Special Notion of the True Church," Legrand gives a definition of the Church "considered adequately, that is, in terms of its soul and its body together." [17] Despite the fact that this "adequate" definition of the Church is slightly more prolix than the one Legrand applied to that "which is called the body of the Church by Catholics," the two formulae are objectively identical.

Thus, by the end of the eighteenth century the misuse of St. Robert's term "body" and "soul" of the Church had reached its final result. The *De ecclesia militante* had been written in the first place to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the one and only supernatural kingdom of God of the New Testament is an organized society, the religious community over which the Roman Pontiff presides as the Vicar of Christ on earth. St. Robert had shown conclusively that there is and there can be no such thing as an "invisible Church" in the dispensation of the New Testament. He had concentrated on the proof that there is only one *ecclesia*, and that consequently there is no possibility of postulating an "invisible Church" in any way distinct from the one visible Mystical Body of Jesus Christ in this world.

Now, hardly more than a century and a half after St. Robert's death, the very contradictories to his basic teaching were being set forth by Catholic writers using his own terminology. The name "soul of the Church," which St. Robert had applied to what his contemporaries called the inward or invisible bond of ecclesiastical unity, was gradually deflected from the purpose it had served in the *De ecclesia militante* until it finally became a vehicle for the expression of the very teaching St. Robert had set out to disprove. For D'Argentré, the "soul of the Church" in the Bellarminian sense was no longer one of the two bonds of union within the Church but became a factor "acting as a principle of spiritual life for the faithful." For Tournely and Kilber this same "soul of the Church" was made to function as a principle in the definition of an "invisible Church" made up of men and

[17] Cf. Legrand, *loc. cit.*

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women in the state of grace. For Legrand and the men who followed him, this same "soul of the Church" became itself an "invisible Church." And the reality to which St. Robert had applied his classical definition became, not the one true *ecclesia* of the New Testament, as it was in the *De ecclesia militante* and as it is in Catholic doctrine, but only "the body of the Church."

Legrand's misuse of the Bellarminian terminology was copied quite frequently during the course of the nineteenth century. One of those who followed him was Bonal, who wrote in his popular and highly influential manual:

> The body of the Church is the collection of men who outwardly profess the doctrine of Christ and partake of the same sacraments under the *magisterium* and rule of legitimate pastors and particularly of the successors of Peter.
>
> The soul of the Church is the collection of men who interiorly assemble in one spiritual Church through the spiritual and internal bond of faith and of charity.[18]

This kind of teaching came down into the twentieth century, and by this time it had acquired a false appearance of theological tradition. Paul Vigué asserted that "the theologians distinguished two Churches, the one visible and the other invisible, the body and soul of the Church."[19] Otto Karrer claimed that "theology has deduced the doctrine of an invisible Church of good men and women, even outside the communion of the visible Church."[20] The "theology" responsible for this deduction was, in the last analysis, merely a long and gradual deformation of terms originally and unfortunately employed by St. Robert Bellarmine in his *De ecclesia militante.* The "theologians" who propagated this teaching were men who misunderstood the original meaning

[18] Bonal, *Institutiones theologicae ad usum seminariorum*, 16th edition (Toulouse, 1887), I, 400.

[19] Vigué, in the symposium *Ecclesia*, edited by Agrain and published by Bloud et Gay (Paris, 1933), p. 101.

[20] Karrer, *Religions of Mankind*, translated by E. I. Watkin (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1938), p. 262.

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St. Robert had attached to the terms "body" and "soul" of the Church.

There can be no doubt that the progressively more inaccurate teachings about the "body" and the "soul" of the Church were in great measure responsible for poor teaching about the dogma that no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church. The individuals who were misled into believing the reality of an "invisible Church," in some way more extensive than the visible Church of Jesus Christ, were prone to imagine that this "invisible Church" was the social unit really necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation.

The greatest favor accorded to sacred theology by the encyclical letter *Mystici Corporis Christi* was the banishment from theology, once and for all, of this teaching about an "invisible Church." Since the appearance of the *Mystici Corporis Christi,* and especially since the publication of the *Humani generis* and the *Suprema haec sacra,* the elements that have militated against an accurate explanation of this dogma have lost their force. These documents of the Holy See have manifested the truth of the Church's necessity for salvation for what it really is, the statement of the dignity of the Catholic Church as the one supernatural kingdom of the living God.

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